THE

# NEW ENGLISH REVIEW MAGAZINE

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VOLUME I. [NEW SERIES] NO. 2 OCTOBER 1948

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THE
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## OCTOBER COMMENTARY

### ECONOMIC INQUEST, 1948

THE financial position of Great Britain to-day is the outcome of particular policies—some helpful, some the reverse—applied in a unique and decidedly tricky situation left by the Second World War. Let us examine, first the environment, then the policies.

As a country, we are "living worse" at home than we did in 1938—which was not a particularly good year, as immediate pre-war periods went—by about ten to fifteen per cent, and not paying our way abroad. To put it more exactly, we are consuming at home what, had we chosen to have it in 1938, would have cost us, not less but slightly more than what we *did*, in fact, consume in that year. But we have less satisfaction, because the modern melange has more tobacco and frills, and less meat, butter and many things of which we should take more if we could, than the 1938 mixture.

We are exporting goods at a rate about forty per cent higher (by volume) and importing at a rate about twenty per cent lower than in the pre-war year. On the face of it, our overseas balance sheet should look much better than before the war. By a tragic paradox, it is far worse. In fact, we have drawn successively, since the war ended, on an American line of credit and on our reserve of gold and hard currency; now we are receiving Marshall aid, without having yet succeeded in balancing our overseas accounts by our own efforts.

As a nation, in short, we are worse off, and we are acutely conscious of it. That is a state of affairs, responsibility for which lies both in our stars and in ourselves. It is worth while asking how that has come about, and hoping that, in the analysis, possible ways of correcting faults of national policy and collective action will emerge.

UNDOUBTEDLY, the war is responsible for much, though not always in a way that is immediately obvious. Our forefathers used to be intensely concerned, after every war, with the increase in the National Debt; but that is one of the least of our troubles now. Between 1939 and 1945 its amount increased

nearly fourfold, but its annual service less than twofold. Under the masterful prescience of Lord Keynes, we financed this war on a half to three per cent interest basis, instead of from four to six per cent in the First World War. Besides, we have had an inflation, in the course of which prices have risen at least twofold; so the cost of servicing our internal Debt (which is a more or less fixed annual money payment) expressed as a share of the total money value of the national income, now represents little if anything more than the pre-war debt service. We are paying virtually as much on food subsidies as on the whole National Debt. What worries us chiefly to-day, strange as it may seem, is the war's effect on other countries, and the way *that* impinges on our own problems. Sooner or later, every discussion of the present difficulties and future problems thrust upon Britain leads back to the question of our *external* balance and the way it affects, and can be affected by, our own internal action.

The "cost" of a large-scale and prolonged war is measured, mainly, in three ways: physical destruction, diversion of current output-energy from production of more peaceful to more warlike ends, and what economists call "dissaving"—the running down of existing capital without replacing it. Under the first of these three heads, we finished the war relatively well. Damage to our industrial equipment from bombs and V-projectiles was small, relatively. Destruction of residential buildings was somewhat more extensive. It aggravated the housing shortage we should have had in any case, because of the diversion of labour and materials from residential building during the war left us six years "behind" at the end of it. Our real internal losses were mainly under the second and third heads: the peacetime goods we *might* have had, and the replacement and renewals of our peacetime equipment we did *not* carry out. But that has not prevented us increasing our industrial output to more than the pre-war level in less than three years from the end of hostilities. In engineering, generally, for obvious reasons, our productivity benefited from the war. The same, broadly, is true of agriculture. Our heaviest losses, which brought us no offsetting gains, direct or indirect (apart from finishing on the winning side) were external. We sold off many of our best overseas assets, and finished with an external war debt of £3,500 million of our own. These things were the price we paid (or promised) countries abroad for our war effort—over and above the aid America gave us by lease-lend.

IN spite of all this, if we were a self-sufficient country, or even, say, nine-tenths self-sufficient, and did not need to import raw materials and foods on a substantial scale and export our own goods to buy them, we should be, comparatively speaking, well off now, considering how much we threw into the struggle. But that is anything but true of Europe as a whole. Germany suffered greater physical destruction, relatively, than at any time since the Thirty Years War; and she lost the war as well. The disruption of Germany's economic system in itself is a crippling European factor, whose influence extends far beyond Germany's own borders. In addition, some countries, like France and Holland, which endured

German occupation, and have still a long way to go with their own recovery, have lost heavily in their extremely important colonial possessions in the East—partly through the devastation of Japanese warfare and partly by impairment of political control. Add European complications over the Iron Curtain, and the temporary eclipse of Europe as a post-war producer and trader scarcely needs further explanation.

With Japan out and Russia a negative influence, only one great world Power remains. The United States of America now has an output virtually twice as great as before the war and she has certainly done her best to pay her quite indispensable part in world recovery. But its unavoidable counterpart has been a shortage of dollars all over the world.

LET us now endeavour to fit Great Britain into this world-picture. So far, the economic Counsel for her defence can plead that she has largely been, like Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, the victim of circumstances, and should leave the Court without a stain on her post-war character. Certainly, the international pattern explains much, once its essentials are understood. It explains to-day's British exports that are "unrequited", because they go to war-affected countries which cannot themselves export on the pre-war scale, or to countries which are our war creditors and offset them against our sterling debt. It explains our (and other countries') trade-reducing effort to balance imports and exports country by country, bilaterally, because, with a world divided into "hard" currency countries and "soft" currency countries, triangular trading is extremely difficult. It explains the turning of the "terms of trade" against us—that is, the disproportionately greater rise of the price of our imports to that of our exports. An abnormal strain has been thrown on the Western Hemisphere (particularly America, North and South) as a source of supply. And America decided, months ago, to take the ceiling off prices in the middle of a boom.

We can see, in fact, a host of reasons why we are having to export a great deal more, and import less, are still worse off than in 1938, and even so are not paying our way. But it would be wilful blindness to count that the whole explanation of our difficulties. We are not entirely passive agents in the matter. Our own policy, on matters well within our internal control, has not been free from serious faults. There are many heads to the indictment that can be brought against us, but they can all be summed up in one: our own production has been less than it could and should have been. Most of the reasons for that are not at all to our credit.

IT is proposed here to consider politics as objective factors contributing to economic and social results. They cannot be left out of the post-war reckoning. The advent to power, in July, 1945, of a Socialist Government in Great Britain, materially altered the shape of future events. It intensified certain tendencies already present—the social policy of the wartime Coalition Government would have seemed wildly Left to any Chartist. And it introduced a number of new and rather

distracting influences of its own. There is a well-known historical principle, validated by events from the Black Death up to and beyond the French Revolution. Great European movements invariably make the channel crossing. England has never yet escaped them. But they suffer a sea-change en route. When continental countries have revolutions, we change Governments.

So it has happened this time. The putting of the Socialist Opposition into power, three years ago, was a typically conservative British reaction to a strong Leftward tide which has swept, east to west, across Europe.

EVEN a moderate dose of Socialism, however, injected into an economy in the condition described earlier, was bound to have effects going far beyond those expected in more normal times. What, in fact, have been the economic consequences, in a post-war environment, of the effort to apply three fundamental tenets of a Labour administration—the improvement of the worker's lot, the closer equalization of incomes and the central planning of production and distribution.

Under the first head wages have risen rapidly and the volume of goods available for home consumption much more slowly. That, undoubtedly, has been a considerable factor—though not the only one—in the inflationary situation whose flames the present Chancellor of the Exchequer is endeavouring to quell. (His predecessor fanned them, in one-aimed and one-eyed pursuit of another Labour objective, low interest rates.) It is a debatable question how far rising wages, as such, have been merely a lever in raising industrial costs and quickening the speed of the purchasing power-goods steeple-chase, and how far they have raised national output beyond what it might otherwise have been—if we had had many major labour stoppages, for example, instead of isolated "unofficial" ones. It is a moot point, also, how far the Government's own responsibility extends. Throughout, the Government has studiously left the determination of wage rates and working conditions to the employers and trade unions. But until Sir Stafford Cripps produced his disinflation policy a few months ago, with its proposed "stop" on wages, prices and dividends, the Government's neutrality, it is true to say, was of the benevolent kind. In a way, that was inevitable. One need not accuse the authorities of being influenced by the financial support which the trade union movement has regularly afforded Labour, as a Party, in and out of office. But the tie-up between the Government and *one side* in industry has reacted on policy in innumerable ways. Important Cabinet posts have been filled from professional trade unionism. Whenever the Government has desired to hear the authentic voice of "the workers", it has consulted the Trade Union Congress.

ADMITTEDLY, even a Conservative administration would probably have found it expedient to give certain hostages to fortune, by way of higher wage rates. At the end of a war, people who have been promised a new world are expecting *something*. And as war leaves belligerents not richer, but poorer, there is little to give them but promises and stamped paper. Whatever be the verdict

about wages, however, there can be no extenuation whatever of the Labour Government's detachment while hours of work were being reduced all round. This was a demand, urged by Unions in an unusually strong tactical position wholly without any reference to the national need. Recovery obviously called for an increased, not a reduced effort. The Government—any Government—ought immediately to have denounced the move as suicidal. It ought to do so now. Insufficient production has dogged every effort to pull ourselves out of the slough. We are still producing less than we could produce if no one worked a minute longer than in 1938. Part of the price is a cut in our capital development, the surest way of making an appointment with Nemesis.

IN these circumstances, much of our "planning" has been a matter of "cutting" this and that. It has involved a great deal of regimentation, but on the more positive side the Government has too often planned like Owen Glendower, who called spirits from the vastly deep without being quite certain about the response. By persuasion, certainly, the Government has now succeeded in obtaining a qualified assent to a wages "stop" and (chiefly of psychological consequence) a "ceiling" on company dividends. From the start, however, the wages class showed signs of leaking badly, and seems likely to give way. And, anyhow, "planning" on the production front means allocating tasks to various industries. And the Government even with its Control of Engagements Order, has no power to allocate the necessary labour to carry them out. Men and women can be moved from less to more vital industries only by differential wage inducements which the Government has no ability to give, or by the exercise of totalitarian power which the Government will never be granted, in peacetime, in a free economy.

It is perfectly clear that, under conditions like these, any "improvement in the worker's lot" can only be relative. The general standard of living is lower, so levelling must be downward, not upward. Perhaps the lot of a small, formerly "submerged" minority is better. But for the remainder, the best one can do is raise the reduced standard of the most numerous class half-an-inch, by taking a foot off the "higher income" classes.

Two causes have contributed to the spoliation of the better-off—the purely "class" desire of some influential members of the Government to eliminate "privilege" conferred by wealth, and the necessity of financing ambitious and expensive social schemes at least cost to those most likely to benefit from them. Unfortunately, the national income has been about twenty-five or thirty per cent too small to allow even desirable things to be done comfortably. And the "upper crust" of incomes has been too thin, even with income tax at 9/-, heavy discrimination against profits and the virtual confiscation of all individual incomes of over, say, £6,000 a year. The disappearance of "the rich" (other than those who live on their capital or traffic in the contravention of the law) has still left many benefits to other classes to be paid for by those classes themselves. To a considerable extent, the dog, is being fed on his own tail. But in the process there has been a holocaust of incentive among managers, professional people and, generally, those accustomed to

assume the risks inevitable to all business operations, and wholly indivisible from *expanding* business. People expect the reward of success to be proportionate to its hazards.

THIS, then, is the background against which, in the present writer's opinion, the financial problems of Great Britain ought to be viewed. Some of them are critically examined on other pages of this issue of THE NEW ENGLISH REVIEW. Readers will learn with surprise, from a review of the implications of present taxation levels, that the country is raising more from the taxpayer to-day than when we were fighting for our very existence during the war. In part, this is both a consequence of and an attack upon inflation. But in larger part it is the concomitant of food subsidies, unemployment and sickness benefits, improved health and educational services, higher old age pensions and generous Government assistance to the housing programme.

Another writer discusses the dollar problem, which he refuses, in contrast to certain more pessimistic publicists to-day, to regard as insoluble. A third contributor takes up the question of the future of sterling itself, and offers some strongly personal, and undoubtedly thought-provoking, views on the way to make it, in his own words, a "valued currency". How great a threat inflation still offers to our well-being is made clear by a fourth writer.

THE general conclusion that emerges from any serious analysis of the last three years must be that up to now we have failed to give the best that is in us. Our experience provides no conclusive argument for or against "planning", in the sense of "purposive direction of economic affairs". If the national production had been higher, central planning might have been more truly purposive. In fact, so far as it has not been irrelevant, it has been purely defensive and therefore, for the most part, restrictive. And its admixture with more political objectives has frequently crushed initiative, diverted effort and resources, introduced unhelpful "class" prejudices, and consequently tended to obstruct the increased effort which alone could have enabled true planning to begin to function.

HARGREAVES PARKINSON.*

*Postscript*. The Government's nationalization policy is not discussed in the above review because its effects must obviously be long term effects, and the problems it raises are long term problems, which are discussed in a separate article. Beyond having diverted a certain amount of Parliamentary time from other matters, and possibly exacerbated the resentment of those who, though they do not share the Government's political views, still have an indispensable contribution to make to the national effort, nationalization has neither advanced nor retarded national recovery, in the last three years, in any measurable way.

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* *Mr. Hargreaves Parkinson is the Editor of "The Financial Times".*

# THE LIMITS OF TAXATION

BY THE EDITOR

THE total government expenditure chargeable against revenue in 1913 was just under £200 millions. In the inter-war years from 1923 to 1935 it averaged rather more than four times the 1913 figure, though rising substantially to over £1,000 millions in 1938. The comparative figure for 1948-1949 is almost £3,000 millions. This vast sum, which in the current year is being wholly raised from taxation, exceeds the highest amount so raised in any war year. In the meantime the national income from rent, interest, profits, professional earnings, salaries and wages (including the pay of the armed forces)—being the income received by factors of production in the course of producing the current output of goods and services—which was in the neighbourhood of £2,000 million in 1913, had risen to an estimated £4,700 in 1938 and to over £8,500 in 1947. We can thus say that the government was collecting in direct and indirect taxes and through the post office surplus, ten per cent of the national income in 1913, over twenty per cent by the end of the inter-war period, and to-day approximately thirty-five per cent.

The aggregate private income is, of course, higher than the real national income as calculated by the statistical office because it includes interest on the national debt and transfer incomes—social security payments, war pensions and so forth. On the other hand, the figure given for our real income includes a number of payments which, although earned income in the sense that it represents services rendered, are, from the purely economic point of view, transfer payments. This is true, for instance, of the pay of the armed forces and the wages and salaries of public servants. The earnings of all factors of production in 1946 were £8,100 millions and the aggregate of private income for that year was £9,455 millions, but the net product of enterprises was only £6,250 millions. Subject to minor adjustments, the difference between the two last figures represents government expenditure collected from the recipients of the net product of enterprises (in the form of wages, salaries, rent, interest and profits) and utilized either to supplement the incomes of those engaged in enterprises (certain social security payments and war pensions, for instance), and to provide with an income people engaged in activities not classified as enterprises—notably the armed forces and the servants of public and local authorities, and the holders of government securities.

BROADLY speaking, and leaving on one side transfer payments, all government expenditure is devoted to providing society with instructors and guardians whose sociological function is to tell society what to do and how to do it, to see that they do it and to protect them while they do it. All these services are essential in an advanced urbanized community, but the problem which faces a society like ours, which has a gravely impaired economy but has become accustomed to an exceptionally high standard of social and public services, which it expects to be progressively increased, is a very real one. How much can be taken out of the earnings of enterprises to provide the services without ruining the enterprise themselves?

We must not allow ourselves to be misled by the oft repeated argument that nothing is so truly productive as, *e.g.*, money spent on education or medical services. This is to mistake a metaphor for an argument. There is a real difference which is obscured by this kind of language.

The true producer can and will continue to produce without the teachers or the policemen—over an immense space of human history he has done so. The teachers and the policemen cannot survive for a day without the toil of the producer. The question how many teachers and how many policemen we can afford is a real one. Clearly, if the

producer were ever left by the tax-gatherer with so little that he starved, we should have reached a point when we could say clearly that the limits of government expenditure had been exceeded. Are we in danger of starving our producers to-day?

That we are in very truth in danger of starvation is certain. We cannot earn by our export trade enough, or nearly enough, to pay for the food we must consume if we are to live, but that is not to say that we can solve our problem by the simple expedient of cutting down government expenditure. Only in so far as the quantity, quality or cost of our production is affected by government expenditure will a reduction in taxation, or a change in its character, help to solve our economic problem.

THE problem is a two-fold one, concerned on the one hand with the absorption in government services of manpower required for production and on the other with the damage inflicted by taxation on our productive efficiency.

In so far as our productive economy is short of manpower, all government activities which employ manpower on a substantial scale must come under scrutiny because shortage of manpower not merely decrees the volume of production but also its competitive efficiency. There is no doubt that by the expansion of government activities and of the armed forces we have made great inroads on our manpower just when we have need to increase our production and have given organized labour in the productive industries a bargaining power which it is idle not to expect them to use. They have used it and they will continue to do so. Unfortunately the greater part of the manpower absorbed by the government is in the armed forces and the auxiliary supply services and no one can conscientiously recommend any substantial reduction on financial grounds. There are many who believe that a smaller, more highly armed, long service army would be a more formidable military and diplomatic instrument than the present conscript army, but that is a change which, if made, must be made on military grounds and falls outside the scope of this article. For the rest, it is clear that we are paying in manpower (and going to pay far more) for the expansion of our education services and for the (purely political) decision of the present government not to restore the price mechanism but to restrict consumption by rationing. The cost of administering the food subsidies, of the rationing system necessary to prevent subsidized foods being eaten too freely and of collecting the indirect taxation necessary to pay for the subsidies, is very high. The failure to face the real increase in the cost of living after the war, the decision to maintain an artificially valued £ and an artificial price level, have unquestionably increased the number of government and local authority officials engaged in essentially unproductive labour. The result, moreover, has been to create at great cost an actual dis-incentive to increased production. The maintenance of necessaries, such as food, clothing and housing, at artificially low prices out of money borrowed from abroad—for that in effect has been what has happened—has misled all classes as to the true economic position of the country and in a free country an uninformed public opinion is altogether too dangerous.

We are bound to conclude that a wise government must from now on consistently aim to replace physical by fiscal controls and at the restoration of the price mechanism. The simplification of government and the reduction in the manpower employed will be substantial: and the present disincentive to effort will be removed. The process, however, will be a very slow one and its effect though quite substantial as far as manpower is concerned will be more apparent than real as regards the burden imposed on the tax-payer.

IT remains to consider the second and more immediate practical aspect of the problem, the extent to which the efficiency of our productive machinery is impaired by our present taxation. In considering it, we propose to assume that all the services provided by government are good of their kind and that none can be cut down without some loss. Our analysis of the problem will, we believe, show that the limits imposed on the

tax-gatherers by the need for maintaining productive efficiency arise from politics rather than from economics and affect the character and incidence of taxation rather than its amount.

IN a totalitarian or slave state, the only limit on government expenditure is the standard of life which the slaves require to induce them to work hard and the cost of the internal police services necessary to keep even well-fed slaves up to the mark. Men trained in the political-economy of the free world were surprised and puzzled by the ability of Hitler's Germany and, to a lesser extent, of Russia in the 'thirties, to undertake vast capital works, build up huge armaments and yet keep their currency and their standard of real wages relatively stable. Both governments were undoubtedly able to get for their own predatory purposes an immensely greater share of the total annual output of their people than any peace-time government of a free society has ever been able to get. Very many people in the free countries, while disapproving of the methods employed and notably of the police organization and the constant persecutions and purges, saw in the comparatively greater efficiency of government in Germany, and, in some respects, even in Russia, an argument in favour of state control as such. This was a complete and disastrous misunderstanding of the position. The un-freedom, the docility, of both peoples and the ruthless exercise of repressive powers over mind and body by both governments was not an accidental concomitant of their admittedly impressive material achievement but its sole and indispensable condition. We said that the limit to government spending and so to government activity was not financial but political. We can now make the statement more precise and say that the limit is imposed by our desire to remain a free people and is high or low in proportion to the extent and quality of the freedom we desire.

Political freedom rests on economic freedom. It is the fact that the voters represent labour free to work or not to work, capital free to produce what it likes and to go where it likes, and brain power free to serve whom it pleases and in whatever cause, that gives the vote its power. Nationalize the means of production, distribution and exchange, have one employer only—the state—and all classes of voters lose their power. The vote becomes no more influential than an expression of opinion in an undergraduate debating society or a gallup poll.

IT is the desire of the majority of our people to retain their political freedom which makes this question of the limits of government spending of urgent importance. The free economy cannot work unless government expenditure is kept within certain definite limits. Those who deny this will always be found, in the last analysis, to be opponents of freedom. There is no real difference of opinion among informed people as to the nature of the limits necessary if the truly free economy is to be maintained in a state of efficiency.

1. The will to assume the risks of productive enterprise must be maintained. The motive which creates the will is not profit but security which in a free society requires that
   (a) the producer be able to maintain his capital assets, land, plant, machinery and liquid working capital intact and to obtain fresh capital as the needs of society demand;
   (b) he shall be able to guarantee a reasonable security to his fellow workers;
   [(a) and (b) both imply the ability to build up substantial tax-free reserves]
   (c) he shall be able to make provision for his dependents and his children as well as for himself in old age (this implies the possibility of personal saving and a relatively stable price level).
2. In addition to providing the incentives to personal effort on the part of the *entrepreneur* and the business executive, the free economy must provide adequately for the professional classes on whom, in the technological age, the

efficiency of business so largely depends. Just as the risks of entering competitive productive enterprises must be suitably rewarded, so there must be adequate rewards for those who are going to enter those professions which require a high and expensive education and a long period of probation.

3. The free economy demands the ability to buy and sell on favourable terms in the world's markets. This implies a fiscal system which (a) does not run up costs to the point when exports must be subsidized and imports rationed, and (b) allows industrial, distributive and agricultural equipment of all kinds to be progressively modernized and maintained in a condition of absolute efficiency.

WE must not delude ourselves into thinking that all these necessary conditions can be achieved by fiscal methods. The validation of our currency first of all and secondly its stability are essential preconditions of the restoration of an efficient, free economy. A reduction, however, in the proportion of the total national income which is absorbed by the tax-collector and a change in the incidence of taxations are equally essential.

*Firstly*, personal initiative is thwarted by rates of taxation on earned income so high that, *e.g.*, a man who marries young cannot give his children first-class higher education unless he has capital which he can spend in the process. The socialist answer that education is available free for all does not meet the case because higher education is not, and can never be: it is available free only to those whom the state and its officials select. The chief of all incentives to business enterprise and initiative is, however, a man's desire to give his children the best possible education of the kind he chooses for them.

*Secondly*, taxes on capital must not operate so as to force, as they do to-day, the break-up of economically efficient estates and the forced sale of prosperous businesses.

*Thirdly*, taxes on profits must not operate so as to prevent the maintenance of the capital assets of businesses and their expansion and modernization of plant.

*Fourthly*, indirect taxation at a level which creates an artificial cost of living and thus depreciates the exchange value of the £ are fatal to the export trade. Indirect taxation cannot, other things being equal, be at higher rates than those operating in the countries with whom we have to compete in the world's export markets or to whom we have to sell our goods.

*Fifthly*, direct taxation must not be at such a rate as to have in the long run the same inflationary effect as indirect taxation. Broadly speaking, at least half the increased taxation on salaries since 1938 has been met by the employers. Exactly the same occurred after the 1914-1918 war. The effect of the high flat rate of taxation on profits and the new addition tax on profits is also directly inflationary in those businesses which have a need to put to reserve—as nearly all businesses have—sums greater than the inland revenue allowance for depreciation, etc.

*Finally*, the rate of taxation, direct and indirect, must not be such as to lead to evasion, or alternatively to costly and inquisitorial control in order to prevent evasion.

The socialist argument that the government servant cannot evade taxation, and that it is only the lower morality of the professional and business community which leads to legalized evasion, is largely incorrect. The government servant has security of tenure and a pension until he dies at rates which no business or professional man, with taxation at its present level, can possibly provide for himself out of savings. As regards businesses, the motive behind the legal evasion of taxation is a wholly honourable one. It is to ensure the continuity of the business, which means adequate reserves against bad times and generous and systematic provision for the maintenance of plant and equipment at the level of competitive efficiency. This result can hardly be achieved within the framework of the existing tax laws and the time seems to be approaching when the prudent direction of business will become impossible and businesses will be

forced by government to conduct their affairs with what in Victorian times would have been regarded as almost criminal irresponsibility; with no reserves, with plant and equipment run down and no provision adequate in a world of rising costs for its modernization and expansion.

SOME very clear principles emerge from these considerations.

(1) Taxation of personal earned incomes must not preclude savings out of earnings enough at least to enable a man engaged in competitive industry or agriculture, commerce or the learned professions, to save as much as will provide him at sixty with the equivalent of what his opposite number in the civil service will get in the form of capital sum and pension; further, while making such savings he must be left with enough to maintain and educate his family appropriately. This means a fairly drastic revision of the taxation of earned incomes—probably through greatly increased children's allowances and much more generous allowance on insurance premiums. Both concessions would probably go a long way towards meeting the present difficulty in regard to what looks to the worker like penal taxation on overtime.

(2) The state must adopt a wholly different attitude towards business reserves. At present every penny placed to reserve is regarded by the Inland Revenue, until the contrary is proved, as a profit illegally concealed from motives of personal greed. All the ingenuity of a very ingenious and patient body of officials is directed to writing up the tax liability: *i.e.*, to taking as much as possible out of the working capital of productive industry. That this is done from the highest motives and, as far as the politicians are concerned, primarily in order to finance vast schemes of alleged social security is true, but the fact remains that in so doing the state is in fact destroying the basis of all security which is the financial stability of productive industry.

(3) Death duties cannot be maintained at the present figure unless there is a substantial reduction in the rate of taxation on so-called unearned as well as earned income. Up to 1930 both impositions were at a figure which very nearly if not quite allowed of provision being made for death duties by means of insurance policies. To-day the incidence of death duties is fatal to efficient estate management and to the existence of the family business, which is, sociologically, the very foundation-stone of the free society.

(4) The fiscal system must provide not only security for capital invested in productive industry but allow of a reasonable return on it. The profits tax in its present form is a direct dis-incentive to the expansion of production.

The question, therefore, of the limits of taxation and of government activities, beneficial though they may be, is one which, in my submission, must be approached from the opposite point of view to that usually adopted. Governments must learn to consider not how much they wish to spend but how much they can raise in taxation without impairing the security of the free economy. Alternatively, they must decide to adopt the totalitarian system. If the choice is placed before the electorate there can be no doubt as to the answer. The danger is that the necessity for making the choice will be concealed from them until it is too late and the foundations of the free economy have been rendered too insecure to be effectively restored.

FIG. I. GARRICK AND MRS. PRITCHARD IN "THE SUSPICIOUS HUSBAND", BY HAYMAN
*Reproduced with permission from the painting in the collection of the Garrick Club)*

# PAINTERS OF THE BRITISH STAGE

## 1—FRANCIS HAYMAN AND JOHN ZOFFANY

By GRAHAM REYNOLDS

IT is commonly held that literature is a higher art than acting, for literature is creative and acting interpretative. Yet in their day and generation the renown of players often spreads farther than the reputation of playwrights. We know, or can find out with very little trouble, the features, the gait, the intimate private life of Sir James Jones, who is drawing all London to a contemporary piece in Shaftesbury Avenue; but is it likely that we shall be able to name the author of that play or say much about his appearance and way of life? The same magnetic force which comes over the footlights to the audience pursues them into their normal daily life; but authors, whose methods are cerebral and habits (if they are successful authors) comparatively retired, do not as a class have the same subtle power of quickening the curiosity and interest of their fellowmen.

Death and the lapse of years must surely correct this paradoxical situation? Partly it does. The merciless sifting of time consigns equally to the limbo of forgotten things ephemeral productions and commonplace actors. The plays that survive this process are gathered into the realm of literature, and their authors—Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, Vanbrugh, Congreve, Sheridan and

the rest—enter into the enjoyment of a fame far greater than any actor's. Yet a number of British actors have been able to cheat oblivion and project at least a shadow of their living personalities down to the present day. Garrick, Kean, Macready, Mrs. Siddons, are almost as real to us as any living actor we have witnessed. Partly this is due to the interest always felt by literary men in the stage and the excellent dramatic criticism which has been written, for example, by Johnson, Hazlitt, Lamb: but it is also due in no small part to the artists who painted them in character and fixed some spark of their living fire for ever in their pictures. These paintings, engraved by the foremost men of the time, found their way into countless homes and kept alive a knowledge, not only of the stage scene of the period, but also of the quality of the most renowned actors and actresses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this short series of articles I shall illustrate the work of some of the painters of the documents of the stage, and shall describe them in relation to their times. It is fitting that all the works chosen to illustrate the work of Hayman and Zoffany, who both worked in the age of Garrick, should come from the extensive collections of the Garrick Club, which has acquired an unrivalled gallery of theatrical portraiture.

HOGARTH stands at the source of our theatrical painting, as he stands at the source of our modern portraiture and our genre painting. There is a natural connection between the painting of low life and the stage; it is found in Japanese prints, which reflect equally in their Mirror of the Passing World the busy street scene, famous actors and the girls of the Yoshiwara. Hogarth painted Garrick six times; and from the celebrated painting of him in the character of Richard III was engraved one of the greatest and most celebrated theatrical prints. Francis Hayman, who was Hogarth's boon companion, had an obvious incentive to portray the action of the stage: in his youth he had, like many another English artist after him, worked as a scene-painter, in this case for Fleetwood, manager of Drury Lane. Again like almost every other English painter of the eighteenth century, he has been accused of dissolute living; he is said to have dissipated his talents through too great a fondness for the company of Hogarth, Woodward, Quin and Garrick, acquaintances he made during his scene-painting days. The cold eye of modern criticism has found many of these charges to be the mere rag-pickings of gossip. Lord Radnor described Hayman to a clergyman in these terms:— "He is a very quiet, good-tempered man and will not cause the least trouble in your family. . . . If he had not fooled away many years at the beginning of life in painting Harlequins, trap-doors, etc., for the playhouse, he would certainly by this time be the greatest man of his age as he is now of his country." We may still believe that, if not a great drinker, he was a great eater; he would have ruined the keeper of a tavern near a mansion he was decorating in Fenchurch Street had not the attraction of watching such a gargantuan appetite at work attracted crowds and sold the landlord's drinks. Other stories told of Hayman are certainly *ben trovato*, as for instance that related of him and Hogarth by the tattling J. T. Smith in *Nollekens and his Times*:—"Hogarth, who was a great frequenter of houses supported by libertines, went to Moll King's, in Covent Garden, accompanied by his friend Hayman, who was at all times highly delighted to see that '*moral* teacher of mankind' sketch from Nature. They had not been in the brothel ten minutes, before Hogarth took out his book to draw two ladies whose dispute bespake a warm contest; and, at last, one of them, who had taken a mouthful of wine or gin, squirted it into the other's face, which so delighted the artist that he exclaimed: 'Frank, mind the b——'s mouth!' Hogarth introduced this incident into the third plate of his Rake's Progress".

HAYMAN'S contemporaries dealt no more kindly with his reputation as an artist than with his private life. Churchill summed up many people's view in *Gotham:*

> ***Not such a likeness as through Hayman's works,***
> ***Dull Mannerist! in Christians, Jews and Turks***
> ***Cloys with a sameness in each female face.***

FIG. II. GARRICK AND MRS. CIBBER IN "VENICE PRESERVED", BY ZOFFANY

*(Reproduced with permission from the painting in the collection of the Garrick Club)*

In fact he was lighter in the hand than Hogarth, he was fertile in invention and gifted as much as Gravelot or Highmore with a proper sense of the elegance and glitter of the costume of that most graceful epoch. The visitor to the Victoria and Albert Museum will be able to judge of these qualities in the two decorations from Vauxhall Gardens which have recently been hung there. As part of his large scheme for decorating Vauxhall Gardens, Hayman gave expression to his continuing interests in the stage by including four scenes from the Falstaff plays; he also designed illustrations to Hanmer's editionof Shakespeare which are valuable sources for the stage practice of the time.

THE two paintings by Hayman reproduced here were executed in or about 1747, the year after Hogarth's "Garrick as Richard III". One (Fig. V) represents Spanger Barry as Hamlet and an actress believed to be Mrs. Elmy as the Queen. The scene is that in which the Ghost ("my father in his habit as he lived") appears to Hamlet, but is not seen by his mother, who is convinced of her son's derangement when he addresses the air:

*Do you not come your tardy son to chide*
*That lapsed in time and passion, lets go by*
*The important acting of your dread command.*

Spanger Barry was the only actor who temporarily challenged Garrick's hold over the public: when the rivals each produced

FIG. III. THE COMEDIANS, LEWIS, QUICK AND MUNDEN IN "SPECULATION", BY ZOFFANY

*(Reproduced with permission from the painting in the collection of the Garrick Club)*

versions of Romeo and Juliet at the same time, Barry's performance was adjudged the better. He was praised for the silver tones of his voice and had the advantage over Garrick in his height and presence, as may be seen by comparing this painting with those that follow. The upturned chair was part of the traditional business, probably handed down from the stage of Shakespeare's own time, as was the ungartered stocking, a symbol of madness:

*Lord Hamlet with his doublet all unbrac'd*
*No hat upon his head, his stocking foul'd*
*Ungartered and down-gyved to his ancle*
*Pale as his sheet, his knees knocking together.*

The other painting by Hayman (Fig. I) represents Garrick as Ranger and Mrs. Pritchard as Clarinda in Dr. Benjamin Hoadley's spirited comedy "The Suspicious Husband". The author is but one example of the oft-traversed road from the Church to the Stage: for he was the son of the Bishop of Winchester. He held the post of Physician to the King's Household, and George II sent him £100 as a compliment on the success of his play, which was still being revived eighty years after it was first produced, despite, or because of, the fact that it was a "profligate pantomime" consisting largely of entrances and exits through windows into bedrooms, and broad small talk. The moment depicted is one where the flighty Clarinda, who thinks "a woman's surest hold over a man is to keep

him in uncertainty; as soon as you put him out of doubt, you put him out of your power; but when once a woman has awak'd his curiosity, she may lead him a dance of many a troublesome mile without the least fear of losing him at last", unmasks to confound her flirting cousin, Ranger.

THE remaining pictures were painted by Zoffany, a German born artist who had had on his first arrival in England a penurious time as a decorator of painted clocks. Garrick himself is given the credit of having discovered Zoffany's talent, while he was employed as drapery painter by the avaricious portrait painter Benjamin Wilson, who had a connection with actors. Legend is uncertain how the discovery came about, whether by Zoffany recognizing a former flame in Mrs. Garrick, or by Garrick discerning better workmanship than B. Wilson's in a picture of himself, or by his simply finding Zoffany at work in the studio. Certainly Zoffany had his first success with a painting of Garrick and Mrs. Cibber in "The Farmer's Return", which he exhibited in 1762. The following year he balanced comedy by tragedy, with his group of Garrick and Mrs. Cibber in "Venice Preserved" (Fig. II). Of Mrs. Cibber it was said that "Her great excellence consisted in that simplicity which needed no ornament, in that sensibility which despised all art. There was in her countenance a small share of beauty; but nature had given her such symmetry of form and fine expression of feature that she preserved all the appearance of youth long after she had reached to middle life. The harmony of her voice was as powerful as the animation of her work. In grief or tenderness her eyes looked as if they were in tears: in rage and despair they seemed to dart flashes of fire." In the intense dramatic tension of this picture we can begin to understand the power of acting which kept Otway's rhetorical drama on the stage for so many years. Zoffany had chosen the climax of the action, when Jaffier in world weariness and self disgust is about to kill the wife whom he worships but who has caused him to betray his friend to death. It is the moment at which his weak character is again deflected from its purpose by her pleading:

FIG. IV. GARRICK AND MRS. PRITCHARD IN "MACBETH", BY ZOFFANY

*(Reproduced with permission from the painting in the collection of the Garrick Club*

*What wilt thou doe? Ah, do not kill me,*
*Pity these panting breasts and trembling limbs*
*That us'd to clasp thee when thy looks were milder.*

When Mrs. Cibber died suddenly, some four years after this picture was painted, Garrick said "Then Tragedy is dead on one side." But there were some who held that Mrs. Pritchard, whose achievements in a comic part have already been illustrated in the painting by Hayman, excelled her in tragedy. In particular she was esteemed the greatest Lady Macbeth of her age—and that in spite of the charge that she was illiterate. Johnson, indeed, remarked that she had never read the play all through. Zoffany's painting of her in the part (Fig. IV) shows her cogent impersonation of emphatic resolve in the face of Garrick's amazed hesitation:

*I'll go no more*
*I am afraid to think on*
*what I've done*
*Look on't again I dare*
*not!*

to which she replies with her imperious rebuke:

*Infirm of purpose!*
*Give me the daggers: the*
*sleeping and the dead*
*Are but as pictures.*

These two works by Zoffany and Hayman's Hamlet cast no unfavourable light upon the stage craft of the mid-eighteenth century. The action of "Venice Preserved" is unmistakably happening in Venice, and the colloquy between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is placed in a recognizable imitation of a Gothic castle of the era of Otranto. The contemporary costumes are no shock to those of us who have seen Hamlet in modern dress, and indeed invest the actors in their parts more adequately than the Augustan version of Elizabethan, or barbaric Scotch, might have done.

The portrait of himself which Garrick has transmitted to posterity is a cumulative one, composed of impressions of many different individual interpretations. It combines the dark lights of these tragic parts and the gaiety of the Suspicious Husband, with his familiar characterization of Abel Drugger of the crinkly face, and other comic parts. The total impression is one of extraordinary versatility and malleability; of a man whose features rearranged themselves to suit the character which for the time being he was representing and who was, as we know from contemporary testimony, both natural and affecting throughout the whole of his vast range.

FIG. V. SPANGER BARRY AND (?) MRS. ELMY IN "HAMLET", BY HAYMAN

*(Reproduced with permission from the painting in the collection o the Garrick Club)*

We return to prose and the comedy of contemporary manners. The next play to be illustrated (*see Frontispiece*, September Number) is "The Clandestine Marriage" by Colman and Garrick. Garrick studied the part of Lord Ogleby for himself, but resigned it to Thomas King who made his name in it. King, who was unrivalled at "crusty crabbed sires, and testy lords" is seen here as an elderly beau warming himself up to play the suitor to Fanny, who has become so confused in explaining to him that she is secretly married, that he thinks she is making advances to him. The picture was painted by command of King George III, who was much taken with the charms of Mrs. Baddeley and insisted that she should be included in it. Zoffany has hit off with remarkable feeling Fanny's embarrassment and, in Lord Ogleby, the experienced leer of an ageing gallant.

Our last illustration (Fig. III) takes us beyond the age of Garrick. The play is "Speculation" and treats topically enough of rich nabobs from India and promoters and speculative builders at home. The bucolic Alderman Arable, an inefficient farmer, has been snoring behind the round table and has woken up to hear Project, the elusive figure on the right, describing a scheme to overreach him. Tanjore on the left, is dressed in the height of fashion for, though returned from India penniless, he is a great sartorial pundit. The Alderman's portrait is repeated in the picture behind him, and the bust on the table represents Garrick. After looking at the picture we hardly need to be told what kind of part was Quick's speciality. He created the rôle of Tony Lumpkin and was a great favourite of George III, who had a pronounced taste for comedy, and even low comedy.

Zoffany is the greatest of our theatrical painters; his neat and precise style and sense of character were well adjusted to the task and he was able to attend to every detail of an interior scene without destroying the unity of his presentation. He appears to have made sketches in the theatre, and was uncommonly swift in execution. His conversation pieces, brilliant and urbane as they are, have in their lighting and their look of studied posing an air of the theatrical about them; Zoffany seems more at ease when he has some definite action to give logic to his grouping. In these scenes showing Garrick, Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Pritchard in tragedy, Zoffany has rendered feeling without falling into the embarrassment of excess; and no task is harder, as the whole history of painting shows, than the natural and convincing portrayal of features under the sway of strong emotion. He has well been named by Walpole "the historian of the stage of Garrick".

# STERLING; DECLINE AND ——

By O. E. CROSTHWAITE EYRE*

YEAR after year page upon page is written to prove or disprove that history repeats itself. At a more abstruse level economists write of cycles or trends to show that there is a rhythm in events which if grasped and controlled can not only rid the world of the suffering caused by past mistakes, but insure against almost all ills. Certainly, as far as post-war problems were concerned the British Coalition Government, in conjunction with other allied powers, spared neither themselves nor the civil service to learn, mark and outwardly digest by White Papers and draft legislation the action that should be taken to offset the economic disturbances of the early 'twenties and to prevent their repetition in the late 'forties. Of the economic problems so studied, the stability and validity of currency received much attention. After the First World War, it was the instability of many European currencies, aggravated by the open speculation of "hot money" which paved the way for many of the subsequent economic trials. The 'twenties showed the inevitable punishment that came to those who distorted their currency, whether such distortion arose through trying to maintain a fictitious parity or through the unilateral acceptance of war-time debts. Those years also showed that to iron out the many difficulties to which European currencies in particular must become subjected in the immediate post-war period, it was essential to have some International Fund which would make the world's currencies available to the participating countries. Such a fund, designed to permit the economically strong to help those weakened by the war, should permit world trade to return to normal within a short time of victory being achieved. Even in the middle of the war the Allies formulated the principles of what was to become crystallized at Bretton Woods. Currency validity and stability were to be organized and those who had suffered most were to be aided by those whose commerce were less affected, and who—perhaps even in their own interest—would, by making their currencies readily available, speed the resumption of multilateral trade.

Among the countries who should be able to benefit by victory Britain was entitled to special consideration. No other country had committed such a proportion of her resources to the war effort: no other country had prosecuted the war with so little regard to the results upon her post-war position. But if the aid we so justly expected to receive was to ensure our recovery, then we had, for our part, to resolve the strains put by the war upon sterling. By 1940 most of our readily marketable foreign investments had been sold and our reserves at the Bank of England were reduced to £100 million. It was only the generosity of Lend-Lease which enabled us to emerge on V.J. day with a moderately satisfactory Central Reserve. Early in the war, too, to defend sterling which was the common currency of the British Empire and of many of our allies, we had financially to segregate the Sterling Area. Within this area all the countries concerned had to do without many consumer and capital goods. The satisfaction of this pent up demand would be certain to be of paramount importance in the immediate post-war period if sterling was to remain the prime common currency for a large part of the world, that it had been during and before the war. The difficulties of meeting this problem were aggravated because as the fountain of resistance to Hitler we were compelled to contract many debts within the Sterling Area. Rightly, throughout the war the movement to and maintenance of forces in the correct theatre at the right time had been achieved without regard to cost. It was left to the days of peace to adjust these costs

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between the sterling area war partners according to the ability of each to bear them, and of the actual physical contribution that each had made to the common war effort.

IN brief, this was our position at the beginning of August 1945. Within the sterling area we had accumulated war-time debts of over £3,500 million. As a central reserve for the whole of the sterling area we had £600 million, built up under Lend-Lease. This sum was quite inadequate to meet our own post-war liabilities, far less those of the sterling area. We knew that every sterling area country would make immediate demands on us either to produce from our own manufacturing resources against payment in sterling the goods of which they stood in immediate need, or if that were impossible, then for the supply of other currency—primarily dollars—which would enable them to make the desired purchases. Whilst these problems occupied the foreground, behind them lay the knowledge that our export trade had vanished in the war, and that there was little hope of reviving the pre-war pattern of world trade on which we depended so largely for earning our foreign currency requirements. Against these numerous and heavy liabilities, we could place our expectations of aid and the knowledge that an international organization was to be established which would help us with the exterior problems facing sterling, if we, for our part, put our own house in order. This, then was the legacy bequeathed to the Socialist Government. But if it was unpleasant it was at least clear, and, as far as possible, the many dangers had been chartered by the Coalition Government of which the Socialists were full members. The Socialists, however, added to these difficulties through the internal policy to which by their election propaganda they stood committed. Externally, too, their task was far from simplified through the prompt cessation by America of Lend-Lease.

To re-establish sterling as an envied international currency immediate and urgent action was required in 1945. No improverished nation could further distort its currency by accepting an unilateral responsibility for wartime expenditure. Nor was there any need for the Socialist, or any other Government that might have been elected to accept such a responsibility. Winston Churchill, as leader of the Coalition Government, had made it abundantly clear that we accepted no moral liability to reimburse to individual countries sums expended under a common obligation. We had supplied men and material to the limit of our capacity. In a world war of movement these men might have to be fed, housed, trained and fight in the lands of any of our partners. Similarly vast amounts of stores might be needed to be moved to and stored in these lands. All this fell upon us to bear at least initially since we were the bankers of the Sterling Area. But a final settlement must alter this charge and place it primarily on those who had benefited and whose impotence to resist Axis aggression had been offset by our strength. In 1945, for instance, we owed India over £1,000 million, though it was the 14th Army which had prevented Bengal suffering the fate of Malay. Equally Egypt was saved from occupation by the 8th Army: yet at the end of the war we owed that country over £400 million. In the three years of Socialist rule no attempt has been made to adjust equitably these war-time debts. Both Dr. Dalton and Sir Stafford Cripps have on several occasions confirmed that they consider these debts should be scaled down, but, in contradistinction to their statements to Parliament, these debts have been acknowledged in full in every treaty they have made. Worse still, large sums have been released from these debts not only to purchase from our current production, but both to permit purchase of our assets in the countries concerned, and as folly of follies, even made available for conversion into dollars and other scarce currencies of which we ourselves stand in the greatest need. Even if, in 1945, sterling had been in the same priviledged position as at the beginning of this century it would have been difficult for a Government to have accepted such liabilities and to have maintained sterling stability. In the days following World-War Two it was currency suicide.

If we were to make sterling viable it was essential that no goods available for export should be wasted. Rightly the Government challenged the country with the slogan export or die. By this it implied that everything we sent abroad would enable us directly, by the acquisition of foreign currency, or indirectly, through the need of the importers to acquire sterling, to buy the foodstuffs and materials we required. But theory and performance widely differed. Countries from whom we bought our requirements insisted on securing releases from their sterling balances. These they used to buy what they needed from us, whilst demanding payment for what they supplied in convertible currency. Each concession we made to any country in this respect raised the bid of the country with which we desired next to trade. And each time a treaty came up for revision, its terms were made more onerous. The rake's progress of sterling is nowhere better seen than of our agreements with the Argentine, starting with the Consortium Agreement, passing to the Andes Pact and finishing with the latest utterances of Señor Miranda.

IF the Socialist Government have exhibited folly beyond belief in their treatment of war time debts, this folly has been exceeded in their attempts through convertibility to re-establish sterling as an international currency. To examine Bretton Woods and its implications would be outside the scope of this article. But in short Britain promised in exchange for the American Loan of a £1,000 million to make sterling convertible by July 1947, and in principle to base her trade on buying irrespective of currency difficulties in the cheapest markets. These undertakings meant, first, that all sterling released from war time debts or earned from any other source could be presented for conversion at the Bank of England. As could only be expected this resulted in a scramble by every nation to rid themselves of sterling and obtain dollars. In a fortnight, over a quarter of the American Loan was spent, and then Dr. Dalton had to make an ignominious retreat and repudiate convertibility. Such repudiation made sterling an even less acceptable currency, and resulted in a further rise in terms by all those countries with whom in the autumn and winter of 1947-8 we had to make fresh trade and payment agreements. On the other hand, enforcement of our undertaking to purchase in the cheapest markets would by the measure of the enforcement prevent the proper utilization and development of the resources of the Sterling Area and in particular of the Dominions. We would, too, be debarred from granting subsidies or paying more in sterling for what we required if similar goods were available against dollars or other currency at cheaper prices. Whilst it is true that the propositions underlining this insistence upon non-discrimination are in accord with the best practices of multilateral trade, they are impossible to any currency which is available in excess of current productivity, and which is not backed by reserves of sufficient size to absorb any strain caused by temporary shortages of supply which necessitate purchases in scarce currencies. For Britain to try with sterling to meet these requirements was impossible and has resulted simply in a lessening of supplies to this country and of grave dis-satisfaction within the British Empire since development of these countries has been retarded.

It is possible that all these strains on sterling would have been minimized if it had been possible for us to supply the consumer and capital goods currently required by the Sterling Area. At least we should, within our financial ringed fence, have improved the viability of our currency. But here again stability has been sacrificed by the Socialists. Capital goods urgently needed by Sterling Area countries have been earmarked for Russia, Argentine or other sources from which food or raw materials for immediate consumption are required. And as the net of bilateralism closes ever more tightly upon our trade so does the international validity of sterling decrease. Country after country makes it a condition of trade that whatever is earned through the initial supply which we seek, shall be liquidated before the expiry of the agreement by delivery from our current production. This unwillingness to hold sterling is further shown by more

recent developments when we are asked to give an extra guarantee, whereby we undertake to guarantee sterling held by those with whom we trade against devaluation. At the present low level of credit to which sterling has sunk, it is difficult to cavil against such a provision. In the markets throughout the world where sterling can be freely expressed in terms of dollars or other currencies in general demand, it can only command some 65 to 70 per cent of its nominal value. To pretend that indefinitely such a disparity can be continued would be absurd.

IT is the common lot of those who write of the mistakes of others, that they find it much more difficult to suggest a solution which would right the harm that has been done. And certainly in the case of the sickness from which sterling is suffering it is far from easy to know how at this stage to arrest the fever. For it is not only the harm done by Socialist mistakes which has to be combated: it is more fundamentally the basic error of the Socialist controlled currency which have led to our present plight. There are, however, certain essential steps which must be taken.

FIRST and foremost war-time sterling debts must be blocked absolutely. It is arguable whether, despite the clear statements of the Coalition Government, we have unilaterally the right to scale the debts down to what we believe to be a just figure. But no such moral issue could arise if these debts were blocked until such time as the country concerned agreed with us as to the figure to which the particular debt should be reduced. Nor is there any difficulty incurred or abstruse calculation required either in blocking the relative accounts or at arriving at the counter claims to be presented to the countries with whom we have incurred debts. The accounts are all kept with the Bank of England, and their sum, etc., at any date with any country is known. The Government has readily available the costs borne by us resulting from the campaigns in the various parts of the world. The Socialists claim that were we to block these accounts, we would suffer an immediate reduction in the quantities of food and raw materials that we could secure. The first reaction of certain countries might well be to attempt to force us to reverse our decision by threatening to cut off supplies. But this is a risk that must be accepted. It is better to accept immediate hardship in the knowledge that one's position is bettered, than to shirk it in the certainty that the eventual hardship will be far worse. Our chief financial criticism of the Socialists has been profligacy; that they are ready to beg or borrow, sell any of our assets, or mortgage the future, if they can but avoid admitting failure. In making this criticism, the consequences must be acknowledged, that we have to make good what has been wasted.

SECONDLY, having reduced the amount of sterling immediately available to other countries for purchases directly or indirectly from our productivity, we must adjust our priorities of supply so as to give those within the Sterling Area first choice after we have satisfied the direct demands of the dollar countries, and of our commitments under the Marshall Plan. Fully to implement this policy will take time, since we are at present bound by a number of bilateral trade treaties. These must be carried out, but in many ways even at the moment we could make a start, particularly if it were possible to effect with the consent of America, a modification of the non-discrimination provisions of Bretton Woods. Nor do I believe that it would be difficult to secure release from these provisions, if Washington were presented with the case of how sterling would benefit. Initially it would make sterling a valued currency in a large part of the world, since urgently required goods would be available to those who earned sterling either by direct supply to us or by accepting currently earned sterling in exchange for their goods supplied to a third country. Once economic and hence financial stability had been reached within the Sterling Area, it would then be possible to embark with confidence on a true multilateral policy, for which the initial period envisaged above would prove a sure foundation.

LASTLY, we have to face the vexed question whether sterling should be devalued. Its nominal and real values to-day are very different. There is also considerable evidence that the price of our exports are too high, and that directly the consumer is again able effectively to make his choice, we shall be weighted out of many markets in which through shortage we can now sell. Against these considerations must be put the increased cost of food and raw materials that devaluation would bring. On a purely financial ground it would be impossible to advocate devaluation at the present time. When sterling debts have been blocked, and a start has been made, through a genuine sterling area policy, to rehabilitate sterling, then it would be necessary to reconsider the matter. In all probability by that time the gap between actual and nominal values would have greatly decreased, and whatever new parity had to be considered would represent the true post-war value of sterling. For it must not be forgotten that the present parity is arbitrary and is confirmed by neither past experience nor future expectations. It is as realistic as the punter who uses a pin to select the winner. To achieve an exchange rate which would command confidence throughout the world is essential, and true multilaterial trade is impossible until it is done. Therefore it must be done, and like all difficulties the sooner it is done the better.

In the last three years we have suffered much from incompetence and prejudice, and there are few spheres of our national life to have suffered more than that of finance. Let us this time, even if we doubt our ability to learn from our mistakes to the extent of sinning no more, acknowledge them, and take now the action that at least will give sterling the chance of resuming its privileged rôle amongst the currencies of the world.

# INFLATION AND DEFLATION

By G. L. Schwartz*

*Je révèlerai une chose qui paraîtra incroyable en* 194 . . ., *le prix pour lequel nous mangions: dix-sept ou dix-neuf sous, selon que l'on prenait, entre l'entrée et le dessert, un plat garni, ou séparément viande et legume. Pour ce prix nous avions ie pain a discrétion, du pain frais, du pain blanc comme on n'en voit plus de nos jours. On devine ce que nous en pouvions dévorer. Je crois qui nous avions aussi un demi-setier de vin, mais il me semble qui nous buvions souvent de l'eau, prenant un second dessert a la place du vin.*

Gabriel Chevallier writing of pre-1914 days in *Chemins de Solitude.*

INCREDIBLE to relate it is still possible to argue that there has been no inflation worth speaking of in Britain. A speaker on the radio recently maintained that there never had been inflation here in the everyday sense of the word, as there had, say, in Italy. This comparison is on all fours with the consolation proffered to a man who has fallen from the top of a building, namely that he should think of all the people who have fallen out of aeroplanes.

Our standards of monetary stability seem to have become somewhat debased compared with those of the much-abused nineteenth century. A report recently issued by the United States Information Service began by noting that the major current developments in the United States economy were the actual completion of a third round of post-war wage increases in leading industries and the all-time peaks in the wholesale price index and the consumers' price index. It concluded, with the same complacent note struck by our radio speaker, that a six per cent-a-year rate of inflation—the average rate of rise in the consumers' price index since 1939—was a moderate rate, as price inflations go. Six per cent per annum, and still going up! An amplitude of six per cent would in the old days have embraced a whole trade cycle. The old Sauerbeck index of wholesale prices, much more sensitive and wider moving than a retail index, shows the same figure 72 for 1885 as for 1905. In between, the highest figure was 75 (Boer War inflation) and the lowest 61. The word inflation had no popular meaning before the First World War except in relation to the blowing up of a tyre or a balloon.

We have seen such fantastic monetary tricks since then as would make angels weep. It is doubtful if 200 francs to-day would procure the meal described in the headnote above as obtainable in our lifetime for less than 1 franc. There are no illusions in France about the facts of inflation either after 1914 or after 1939. Perhaps what is meant by inflation, *in the everyday sense of the word*, is evidenced by Hungary where the retail index for May, 1946, on the pre-war base of 100 was represented by the mathematical symbol $74 \times 10^{10}$. We have been spared these monetary horrors in Britain thanks to the persistence of stuffy old-fashioned financial traditions.

Nevertheless, there has been inflation in Britain and to an extent that would make radio speakers look askance at pre-war fees. No sensible person would view with equanimity a further rise in prices over the next decade similar to that which has obtained since 1938. Two great wars have reduced the real value of the £ in substantial measure, and a further depreciation would set in train a social upheaval, and break up the old order of English society. Perhaps some people are not averse to that.

IT would be futile to argue about the degree of inflation that has occurred in this country. Price indices, which are designed to afford a rough measure of the changed value of the unit of account, have been and still are distorted by the effects on prices of subsidies, controls, and other forms of State

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intervention. What is beyond dispute is the increase in the amount of money at the disposal of the population. The deposits of the large clearing banks which averaged £2,161 million in 1938 had risen in 1945 to £4,461 million, in 1946 to £4,846 million and in 1947 to £5,376 million. The disturbing feature of the post-war increase still persists, and the total for July, 1948, was the highest on record. The note circulation which averaged £485 million in 1938 showed a continuous rise to £1,400 million in mid-1947, and the first symptom of the possible halt to inflation has been the subsequent decline to below £1,300 million. Even with allowance for an increased working population and a slight increase in the volume of output and trade, this volume of money and credit would sustain a price level at least double that of the pre-war and we should expect to find this reflected in the price indices. The wholesale price indices, indeed, do march just behind the monetary. The Board of Trade wholesale index averaged 189 in 1947, if 100 is taken to represent 1938, and although it cannot be ascribed to a continuing internal inflation a swift and alarming movement has taken this figure up to 220 in mid-1948. Similar increases are shown by the sturdy veteran index of Sauerbeck.

As already noted these measurements are vitiated by the absence of free markets both at home and abroad. It may be that for some commodities the restrictions make for artificially high prices, although there is reason to believe that up to now they have concealed the real increase in the general price level. In the case of the cost of living there is no doubt about the falsification of the picture on the side of under-estimation. When the old cost of living index became so patently absurd that it was dropped in mid-1947, it showed and increase of thirty per cent over the pre-war level. It was kept at that low level by subsidies, which, if not deliberately selected, were carefully maintained in order to register nominally low prices for the narrow range of goods entering into the old index. When the citizen was lucky to get one egg a month he got it cheaply and that cheapness was given its weight, its pre-war weight, in the calculation of the cost of the household budget. The process by which that part of the cost not paid by the consumer over the counter is paid by him as taxpayer constitutes one of the great farces and delusions of the times. To-day, nearly £500 million drops presumbly like manna from heaven to cheapen the cost of living. Since some of the taxation levied to raise these subsidies consists of indirect taxation, it has the disconcerting result of ostensibly raising the cost of living as more recourse is had to indirect taxation. Higher prices for drink and tobacco and the furtive removal of subsidies on clothing offset the stabilized prices for food, and the fine distinctions between essentials and non-essentials are lost on the disgruntled workers. The cigarette "crisis" of last August was an astonishing manifestation of this. It is significant that the new interim retail index set up last June, which is much more comprehensive in its scope and gives greater weight to the non-essentials, shows a ten per cent rise over the twelve-month, although admittedly food prices have set the pace. It should also be noted, as evidence of the artificiality of this measure of inflation, that rent controls have kept down the increase in this item of expenditure to twenty per cent.

IF you have rent-controlled accommodation, and a substantial stock of pre-war furniture, household goods, and clothing, perhaps sixty to seventy per cent represents the rise in the cost of your living, and if you have that order of increase in your money income left net to you after paying direct taxation you can be statistically recorded as able to maintain your previous standard, the statistics conveniently ignoring such factors as deterioration in quality, greatly restricted range of choice and the harassing inconveniences and discomforts attached to shopping and other consumption activities. What the cost of living is to any but the established household is a matter for conjecture but of frightful conjecture. An ex-prisoner of war who had lost home and everything else out East, when offered a post in England during his belated leave, took

one look at the price of a settee and two armchairs and fled back to Singapore.

Even if sixty to seventy per cent be taken as a rough estimate of the general rise in prices since 1938 this marks a considerable hardship and in some cases suffering for the people constrained to live on a pre-war income. They are not the bulk of the population: they are certainly not its most vocal and influential section but they are equally not the least deserving. They are mostly elderly people living upon pensions or accumulated savings, and they are the prime victims of inflation. There are classes who profit from inflation and on this occasion the main profiteers have been the organized workers. They profit precisely because other classes are victimized and defrauded by the debasement of the currency, by the forced reduction of their claim on the real income of the nation. The sinister possibilities of this method of expropriation are now well recognized. After the First War these results were accidentally achieved by the financial incompetence and ignorance of governments: on this occasion they have been deliberately brought about in some countries in order to wipe out the bourgeois class. Doubtless there are a few fanatical ideologists and academic irresponsibles who would welcome the same process here, under the delusion that a new and viable Britain after their own heart would emerge. Something would emerge but it would not be Britain.

IT must be acknowledged that the present Government has all along shown itself sensible of the dangers of inflation. In spite of its self-assumed mandate to make all things new, it never thought to override the sound monetary traditions which have preserved the pound sterling through the ages. As far as the post-war transition was concerned its economic iconoclasm expressed itself in the stubborn negative of "Don't on any account do what was done last time". One manifestation of this was the determination not to have a post-war boom because of the understandable fear of a subsequent slump. Since a boom is characterized by rising prices the Government found itself committed to price stability. But it was also committed to full employment and cheap money, and very quickly to grandiose schemes of social development and welfare. The attempt to run all these horses in harness produced the economy of suppressed inflation. Under the arrogant lead of Mr. Dalton, additional money and credit were injected into the system, and then the whole apparatus of war-time controls, supplemented by newer devices, was employed to obviate the inflationary effects. They did not eliminate them; they merely disguised them. Hence the legal prohibitions had to be reinforced by an admixture of cajolery, bluff and nagging until in the ironical event the sworn enemies of capitalism were constrained to adjure the population to work and save with more fervour and insistence than would have been tolerated even in the age of Samuel Smiles. Unfortunately, the population, jaded with its war effort, and with more money in its pocket than it had ever had before, was in no mood to listen to these appeals. It ploughed through the American loans, and only the fiasco of convertibility in the summer of 1947 brought the authorities to their senses. The resolution to curb inflation and to establish financial stability dates from then.

The abrupt departure of Mr. Dalton from the Exchequer provided a convenient occasion for a modification of policy. The rash attempt to establish a two and a half per cent rate in a time of strident capital shortages had already failed, and Sir Stafford Cripps was able to accept the situation and discard the artifices of his predecessor. It was also possible to acknowledge that the economy had been overloaded, and that overfull employment created problems as serious as those of under-employment. The tacit recantation was reflected in a neo-orthodox Budget which raised taxation to an unprecedentedly high total in order to achieve a large genuine surplus. Forced saving was thus imposed on the British public in order "to reduce the pressure and ill-effects of inflation".

In April, 1947, Mr. Dalton was still truculently abusing the critics of inflation. He had, so he declared, a poor intellectual view of these baleful Bourbons. They were

intellectually wrong and morally reprehensible. Their views were the irresponsible babblings of persons not of a representative quality. He himself had sought to lubricate the economic system with a sufficiency of purchasing power more evenly spread than before the war. That had been his aim and he had achieved it.

The notion that still more monetary lubrication was required after the end of the war, was surely an historical fatuity, and in April, 1948, Mr. Dalton had the chagrin of listening from the back benches to his baleful successor babbling responsibly about disinflation, the euphemism employed to soften the harsh concept of deflation. Sir Stafford made no bones about the symptoms of inflationary pressure, and disposed of his predecessor's complacent view that it had been held reasonably well in check. The demand for labour and materials was excessive throughout industry; costs, profits and wages had risen through all the year; the pressure of the black market had continued in certain spheres, and great difficulty had been experienced in devoting sufficient of our resources to the types of production most urgent for the country. He also disposed of Mr. Dalton's fallacious dichotomy between the relative ease of the purely domestic financial position and the great difficulty of the overseas position. He explained, what should have been patent all along, that the internal situation was bound to affect our external balance of payments. If inflationary tendencies were not controlled, exports would suffer from the two strong drag of the home market and the too high prices at which they would have to be offered overseas.

UP to a month or two ago it appeared that this salutary process of correction was under way, and one could have argued with some assurance that the end of inflation was in sight. Any satisfaction would have been tempered by the knowledge that the economy was still being buttressed with aid from abroad and that ultimate financial stability was not in sight. But the first signs of disinflation immediately aroused the suspicions and hostility of the school for whom all history is summed up in the hapless experience of the 'thirties, and for whom deflation in any form and in any circumstances is anathema. This opposition provoked the Chancellor to stern rejoinder. He refused to subscribe to any surprise or alarm at the appreciable falling off of the home demand for certain goods and services. This, he asserted, was only the first step in the direction he wanted to go. He had no reason to regret that these things were happening, and the process had certainly not reached the point where he would consider steps to counteract it. Labour was still moving far too slowly into the undermanned industries, the attractions of the home market were still diminishing the pressure on manufacturers to export, and the objective of price stabilization and reduction had not been achieved.

WILL these objectives be achieved? The attempt by disinflation to secure large transfers of labour is certainly not succeeding. The 1948 programme envisaged the displacement of 160,000 workers from the building industries, and there is every evidence that the authorities have capitulated on this issue. In the same way the attempt to secure 108,000 recruits for the textile industries seems doomed to failure, and this is not surprising in an economy in which the size of the tobacco industry is held to be sacrosanct. The policy of income stabilization has coincided with a rising cost of living, and although this is part of the price of general stabilization it will be difficult to reconcile wage-earners to this discipline. How are they to be persuaded that both the increased price of imports and the belated adjustments at home arising out of the previous suppressed inflation ought to be borne within the present income structure? If the present wage line is broken the stage will be set for renewed inflation.

The temptation to seek an inflationary way out of short-run and long-run difficulties is powerful and may prove irresistible. The country is loaded with heavy obligations and commitments both internally and externally, and a depreciation of the real

value of sterling would provide the equivalent of a *tabula rasa*. What happens when a managed currency replaces an automatic one can be seen by contemporary development in the United States where the richest country in history funks putting on the monetary brakes. Is there any Government to-day that can be trusted to do justice to the so-called rentier class? Its past savings are committed and at the mercy of the governors. Inflation from being a clumsy expedient has become a refined weapon of expropriation. Nationalization, for example, can be made profitable by converting industrial capital into Government stock which can be written down by subsequent debasement of the currency. It would be rash to subscribe to the prophecy of continued world inflation throughout this generation, but it is safe to say that on this issue the next few months are critical for this country.

# TO-MORROW

Tu pudica, tu proba,
Perambulabis astra, sidus aureum.
Horace, Epodes xvii, 40, 41.

Grieve not that now
So much of strife thy pathway should beset;
So much of cloud; for peace, so much regret.
Hereafter, thou
So pure, so true,
Shalt shine, thyself a star in gold array,
And mid the silver stars thy royal way
In peace pursue.

S. M. Shaw.

# THE HERTFORDSHIRE POACHER

By LESLIE BONNET

*Illustrated by Joan Hutt*

NOW, if a poacher you will be, you are going into the oldest profession in the world—older than that of some others that should know better. Because the first man, I reckon, snared a rabbit first, so as not to come nigh empty-handed.

But it's a profession that is going through very rum times, very rum times indeed.

In fact, until They can start laying down game again and stocking their coverts like They used, poaching can't settle down to decent, regular habits of business.

Why, before the war, you had to kick them pheasants off the back doorstep of a September morning, though they began to keep more to themselves by Michaelmas. They was there in their hundreds. They'd follow you, nearly set on you sometimes.

NOW there's that few that you know them by name almost. And if that old cock in the Spring Wood was to shout out no more one hard January morning we should all look at each other distrustful, as if there'd been murder done.

## THE HERTFORDSHIRE POACHER

I talk about pheasants because I'm a pheasant man, born to it, bred to go after the long-tailed-'uns. But it's the same with game of all sorts; and rabbits, too: though they aren't properly game, as everyone knows; not unless They calls them coneys. Then They have you.

Nowadays, of course, with things fetching wicked prices there's more temptation to poach, even though there's less about. With pheasants at forty shillings a brace it's hard to let one go by. But it aren't healthy. I was happier when I got half-a-crown apiece; and better off as well. Inflation they call it, as if that explained it. But it's like a dog. You haven't tamed it and trained it and got it under subjection just by giving it a name.

SO if you come to me and say you want to go for a poacher we can take our time considering the thing, because I should reckon you wouldn't be in a hurry to start until things had settled down.

No, if you came to me and said that, the first thing I should do would be to look at you, maybe harder than you'd care for, aye and longer, too.

And you'd wonder what I was thinking; but I shouldn't be—only waiting to see how long you could outface me, or anybody else who looked at you pretty straight.

And those of you who turned sour or nasty or who looked sheepish and silly, I should put off and have a drink together with you and talk about something else.

But those that looked easy and carefree would get a question put them:

"What do you want to be a poacher for?"

That would surprise most of you, I expect. I wonder what you'd answer? Some of you I reckon, would say: "Because it's such a romantic life."

Well, if it is, I suppose it's like all other real romances. You don't know it was romantic until you've done with it and it's gone.

I know I like nice close copsey country and a warm wet wind that stills the tread and blustery enough to take the sound of a shot away behind you into the next parish. Yes, I like a gusty old wind to work close up into and the softness underfoot and the moon being chased across the sky by great, galloping clouds. I can work in such weather.

And I hate hard, bitter, dry nights when the land looks white and spiteful and the frost makes the dead leaves crackle loud, and twigs break underfoot like pistol-shots.

And I hate still nights, when the noise you have to make stays with you and around you and when folk for miles around can say: "That was a shot yonder in Butler's Wood." But if it's romantic, I don't think I shall know—not yet awhile. And nor wouldn't you.

Then there's some of you as might think a poacher was a sort of popular favourite, a gay, handsome fellow as folk would point to and say: "There goes Joe. What a merry rascal to be sure! Never short of something for the pot, I lay."

Perhaps some of you think he frolicks into the Green Man, drinks his latch-lifter amid respectful silence and then shouts.

"Drinks all round, boys, and wish me luck. I'm going out to-night."

I saw one such, once; before the first World War it was—in a play they did in Grime's barn one Tuesday evening. But it was only acting.

NO, your poacher don't hold with pubs much, don't get about with a lot of pals, keeps civil but don't mingle much. They'd soon have him if he did.

You wouldn't find yourself a popular hero if you was in this line. Not in the village. And you wouldn't expect to be popular with They, would you?

I don't know what other ideas some of you might have about why you wanted to be poachers, too; but I should reckon to hear a good many wrong-'uns.

I could tell you why I like it and I could tell you why I hate it. And when I'd done I wouldn't have told you why I do it.

It's you against They all the time. You on your own in the dark; flat on your belly in wet leaves or cowering against wrinkled oak bark as tightly as if it was your mother; or running with your throat dry and all your body atingle, your breath tearing out of your throat like rope, and running for the

gap in the wire and the long field that's the only way out to-night.

It's being cunning, and being frit. It's setting your wits against They. And They are cunning ones; always have been. That's how they got there. That's how they keep there. They're that cunning I love 'em for it.

It's knowing the land like you know your face in the glass and knowing everything on it. It's knowing the quiet way in and the quick ways out. It's letting the weather work for you. It's all you have seen and know, pared away, pared away by the years till it's as clean in line as a fish. It's all They know, woven into a net for you.

It's getting home unhindered, dropping the sack in the wood-shed, closing the kitchen door quiet, no lights in the house. And Nell calling down:

"All right, dear?—Leave your boots downstairs then."

It's right. It's wrong.

And most of you have a hankering after it.

But if you asked me of it, I know the one of you that I would pick on, the one that I might take as a mate to work along with me. It would be the one of you who said when I asked you why you wanted to be a poacher:

"I don't know, mate; but I can't help it. I must."

Yes, that's it.

FLAMINGO BREEDING COLONY IN FLIGHT, RHÔNE-DELTA, JUNE, 1947
*(Copyright G. K. Yeates, F.R.P.S., High Birstwith, Harrogate)*

# FLAMINGO CITY

By G. K. YEATES

OF all the great spectacles in the world of birds there is none more colourful or inspiring than an occupied colony of nesting flamingos. There is none, too, more difficult to find and see. If this is especially the case in Europe, it is true also, though to a lesser degree, in the other parts of this strange bird's breeding range—in India and in the Bahamas Islands; and many are the ornithologists who have striven to see this great sight. The majority have failed; a few have been successful; many have left behind accounts of their efforts which have passed into the classics of ornithological literature—Abel Chapman striving in the heat and mirage of the Spanish *marismas*; Salim Ali in the Great Rann of Kutch; Howard Saunders in the leagues of mud and water around the delta of the Rhône; Lord Lilford, back in the vast wilderness of Abel Chapman's ground at the estuary of the Guadalquiver; and, perhaps greatest of all, that enterprising American ornithologist, Dr. F. M. Chapman, on Andros Island in the Bahamas. His chapter in *Camps and Cruises of an Ornithologist* will surely for ever thrill all to whom the pursuit of birds means anything at all. Few men of this or the last century had greater opportunities than F. M. Chapman; very few have been able to devote so much of their lives to birds. Yet as one reads his account of the flamingos of Andros Island, one feels that even for him he had achieved his highest ambition, known the greatest of all his bird-thrills.

The fascination of the flamingo as a bird calls for no explanation. Its great size and wonderful colouring are familiar to all, for, though in nature a dweller in the wilderness, the bird has been, and is, much kept in captivity or ornamental gardens. Dr. Chapman admirably summed up its attraction in his opening sentence: "There are larger birds than the flamingo, and birds with more brilliant plumage, but no other large bird is so brightly coloured and no other brightly coloured bird is so large."

That such a bird has survived in a world of vandals is due largely to the capriciousness and uncertainty of its nesting and to the difficult and trackless country into which it retires to breed. It is a species of extensive range in both hemispheres, though the American bird, the so-called Rosy Flamingo, is regarded as a subspecies of the typical form which is found from India, through the Aralo-Caspian region and Persia to Western Europe. Herein perhaps its true nursery is the huge colony, estimated by Salim Ali at over 100,000 nests, at the Great Rann of Kutch in India, and it has been suggested that this colony provides the flamingos of all the rest of the Old World. For those that frequent the lakes of Central Africa in such thousands have no known origin. They do not breed there, or, to be more accurate, have never been discovered nesting there.

TO-DAY in Europe there are two localities wherein flamingos are usually to be found and at times certainly nest—the *marismas* of the Guadalquiver in Southern Spain and in the delta of the Rhône, the Camargue of Provence. Their numbers fluctuate considerably, but he is an unfortunate visitor to either delta who does not find these birds in residence and often in great numbers. As many as 10,000 at one time have been recorded in the Camargue. Yet for a brief few weeks, even in summer, they may entirely vanish. Here again origins are obscure, for it is certain that their numbers are not maintained by local reproduction. Abel Chapman never knew of a successful hatching in Spain, and in the Camargue the known records of the fledging of young are few and widely separated in time. It is true that the vastness of these watery wastes might conceal a breeding colony from human discovery,



FLAMINGO BREEDING COLONY IN FLIGHT, RHONE-DELTA, JUNE, 1947
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but the successful hatching could hardly be hidden when the fledged chicks were scattered feeding over the lagoons later in the season. The observations of such are also very few. Whence then come these flamingos and from what source do they maintain their strength? Again—inconceivable though it may sound—the Indian colony has been suggested.

The discovery of an occupied flamingo city is complicated therefore not only by the leagues of water and mud through which the *shikari* must flounder, roasted by the sun and deceived by mirage, but also by the bird's capriciousness. Even in a season when flamingos are present in thousands, the hunter can have no certainty that his quarry is nesting, for it is well-established that this bird does not breed every year in all its known stations. For all we know it may nest annually in one of them, this year in India, the next in Spain, perhaps the next in Persia, now and again in the Camargue. Few, if any, of us are in a position to visit all in the same year to make sure! We do know, however, that even in the Great Rann nesting is normally only once every three years, occasionally once every two. In Spain Chapman's evidence would suggest much larger intervals. In the Camargue they are even greater. Perhaps the measure of the difficulty of locating an occupied flamingo city may best be seen in the fact that since Abel Chapman sent home from Spain in 1883 the first account of the nesting habits of the flamingo, no other Englishman has seen the event in Europe until the present writer and two friends located a "city" of 1,500 pairs in the Rhône-delta in the summer of 1947. The Americans have been successful more often in the Bahamas and several Indian ornithologists, including Englishmen, in Kutch; but in Europe, no. There that privilege has been reserved only for a few Frenchmen who live close to the flamingo's headquarters. A number, however, have seen attempts at nesting—eggs strewn nest-less over the mud, or the great mud-nests built in the shallows of a lagoon, but deserted or with a few abandoned eggs. But the sight of nests that were occupied and above all of eggs that were allowed to hatch into chicks has been seen by few. Even Abel Chapman, who for so long had the splendid opportunity of living on the spot at the *palacio* at the Coto Doñana, never saw or handled a young flamingo.

For this strange state of affairs two reasons have been advanced. In the first place, it seems clear that the flamingo does not need to reproduce itself annually. Man apart, it can have few natural enemies. Secondly, a bird of its habits and environment must be very sensitive to water-levels, always a very variable factor in these big river deltas. Unless conditions are to its exact liking, it misses the season. To these I would add a third—the bird's intolerance of disturbance, particularly in the early stages of nesting. "If the shadow of a cloud passes over them, they will desert." So spoke one of Abel Chapman's keepers. Even in the seclusion of their watery wilderness disturbance can too easily occur—a herdsman rounding up the marsh cattle; "locals" out to fill their larders with eggs; a marshman breaking the close-season for an out of season duck; a half-wild farm bitch in season running amok with a trail of admiring dogs; last, but not least, the over-curious and over-hasty bird-lover who has stumbled on the beginnings of nesting. All these can and have happened, and the last has occasioned the failure of several Camargue attempts. Yet numbers are maintained.

I FIRST saw wild flamingos in that Andalucian bird-paradise where the great Guadalquiver takes leave of the land in a delta of barren lagoon and mud. From the little shooting lodge of Las Nuevas we rode out to a distant lagoon, whereon a thin pink line, pink-reflected into the water, appeared through the mirage, took shape and emerged as a thousand flamingos feeding, each bird, its long neck held down, grovelling in the mud, looking like a round pink ball on three legs. At three hundred yards they rose. The vision glorious! For the flamingo at rest looks more cream than pink, but when it flies, the scarlets of the underwing coverts are revealed, and it displays its matchless glory. Nor was it one

bird in the air, but a thousand, all vermillion-winged, all set against a blue sky, all clamouring with the great music of wild geese.

Two years later, in 1937, and again in 1938, I met the flamingo in the Camargue. In both years it was plentiful, and the sight of a herd feeding in one of the many saline *étangs* became almost a commonplace, if such a scene can ever be taken for granted by an ornithologist. In those years I was too early to find the birds nesting, but in the course of pursuing other species I came to know something of the extent and loneliness of those wide lagoons which the birds favour, to understand better what Howard Saunders had meant by defeat at the hands of heat and mirage, mud and water.

The war intervened and made flamingo-hunting a matter only for nostalgia. This last summer (1947), however, saw me once again with my wife and two companions back by those same *étangs* in the Rhône-delta. In the intervening period the flamingo had nested twice, not only nested but had hatched young and fledged them, a most unusual event—a small colony in 1939; a great one of 2,000 pairs in 1942. The German occupation had made communications difficult and the coastal *étangs* dangerous with mines. The flamingos profited and reared their chicks. But the secret was known only to two Frenchmen, and they wisely kept to themselves their knowledge of the locality.

IF, however, murder will out, so too will rumour. On 7th June—let the date be marked in a red rubric in my diary—two of us, pursuing a slender clue, found ourselves standing on the edge of a remote, coastal lagoon, dotted with low islands and many herds of flamingos. Three-quarters of a mile ahead, through the mirage, there shimmered in the haze a vast "island" of pink. It was the massed battalion of the breeding colony. I have known many exciting moments in the pursuit of birds, but none to equal this, wherein we stood on the threshold of the greatest experience that can befall a bird watcher.

As the flat-bottomed punt brought us nearer, the pink battalion took more definite shape. Each bird stood to attention, long necks held high and many throats emitting goose-like noises of perplexity. Slowly and with great dignity they withdrew into the waters of the *étang* behind. They were followed by a moving carpet of grey-brown chicks, a compact mass of youngsters that, although clearly only forty-eight or seventy-two hours old, showed commendable agility and confidence. When the créche reached the water, they milled round the inner mass of their parents in a constant procession—an island of pink driven by a brown conveyer-belt. Slowly this beautiful sight moved "out to sea"—a spectacle beyond my pen to describe.

Back on the island 1,500 mud nests, each like an inverted flower pot, each with its foundations touching those of its neighbour, stood in mass. On one a single belated flamingo still incubated, her long legs tucked under her body. She was reluctant to leave, but as we approached, she strode haughtily away accompanied by her lord who stood on guard hard by. Her egg was "holed," and within a squeaking youngster loudly proclaimed his desire to emerge and join his fellows. Near by a single chick ran before us, bottom stuck up in the air and head held low. On fat little legs that in their contours would not have disgraced a billiard table he made off for the lagoon at a speed that would have done credit to Jesse Owens. We caught him in the end, an undignified proceeding on slippery ooze, and I have rarely handled a bird with more reverence—the baby *flamant* that would presently grow a Roman nose and change his grey down for pink and scarlet, and grow nearly as big as a man—the baby flamingo that so few had ever handled.

# RADIO OPERA

By NORMAN DEMUTH

THE performance of *Les Troyens* on the Third Programme, which confirmed Berlioz as one of the greatest dramatic composers of all time, naturally led many to conjecture what other operas the Third might have in store. The policy is obvious and the amount of research that has been carried out amongst obscure composers is truly admirable, if sometimes a little misplaced. To perform endless sonatas simply because they are by Haydn and innumerable pieces of chamber music simply because the composers were Bach's contemporaries has the authority of the museum alone, and although the musical archæologists must have rejoiced greatly, others found themselves bored by the sameness resultant from a limited technique. In the field of opera, therefore, there might have been a reasonable apprehension. However, radio opera is not a thing which can be undertaken lightly and unadvisedly, and the considerations are more numerous than is usually imagined. It is more than simply deciding that a certain work ought to be played, and forthwith playing it, because the economic question is serious in that artists with the best will in the world cannot live only on art alone, and the learning of a new *rôle*, even though it can be performed with the copies, is not an easy matter.

Imagination, therefore, has to come to the heel of practicability, and on occasions the latter gives a shock to the former. It would be impossible to speak with any certainty as to the particular operas which have been expected, but it is not so risky to suggest some which might not have been so, and of these *Les Deux Journées* (or *The Water Carrier* as it is called in this country and in Germany) by Cherubini may surely be placed very high on the list. In the first place Cherubini is loosely known as a writer of textbooks and an irascible Director of the Paris Conservatoire. Readers of Berlioz' autobiography are given a lurid account of his activities, and contemporary records show him to have been constantly at loggerheads with any professor or student of any individuality or enterprise. It is true that Beethoven thought extremely highly of him, but so he did of Cipriani Potter. Cherubini is virtually a closed book to-day and his name is a legend.

The only works which are performed here to-day have been the overtures to *Anacreon* and *Les Deux Journées*. We have not had the complete operas for many years, so far as I can find out. An attempt to revive interest in his large choral works showed that Beethoven did the same thing so very much better. *Les Deux Journées*, however, was completely justified not only in performance but in choice. Although Cherubini was an Italian, he had absorbed the best ideals of French "opéra-comique" and in this particular work provided the standard of what such a work could be. The performance was a model of clarity and balance. Although it was produced in French, every syllable was so distinct and we got such a marked feeling of "theatre" that the meaning was apparent even to those who have little French conversation. Further, and this is of the utmost importance, it was shown once and for all that there need be no conflict between the dialogue and its background music. This type of music is often vexatious because of the care taken to keep it *absolutely* in the background. The Programme Engineer in this case was a genius. This production must have surpassed all hopes and banished all fears within the first fifteen minutes. We had here the essence of the perfect radio "opéra-comique." The only thing against it was the length of the synopses which were so detailed that one had almost forgotten what the beginning was about by the time the end had been reached.

It was, therefore, a high-light in the progress of radio opera because it pointed a path and set a standard.

THIS choice makes conjecture and suggestion run riot. If *Les Deux Journées*, why not *La Vestale*, *Robert le Diable*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Mignon*?—from all of which in their entirety may Heaven defend us; but if *Les Troyens* and *Les Deux Journées* are an implication of a panoramic future, then each of these must be heard, thereby turning the Third Programme into still more of a museum. Few of us will be alive by the time the process reaches the present century if thoroughness is to be the standard. The revival of *Les Huguenots* many years ago showed the futility of Meyerbeer save as an historical figure. Spontini was a "character"—readers will remember Wagner's account of him in *Mein Leben*—and his operas are genuinely exciting in their simple-minded way; but not even the most perfervid musicologist could pretend that they are capable of holding interest now. Rossini, too, cannot stand revival save in two isolated cases. This leaves us with Ambroise Thomas, and while there are people left who consider singing the prime factor in opera, regardless of musical and other æsthetic values, then we must admit that there might be a future—but at what a cost!

Radio opera includes works which we ought to hear and those which we would like to hear. The standard works are inevitable. There are those listeners who like to wallow in baths of music such as Strauss provides in *Salome*, and do not mind if the singer is swamped in the torrent. There are others who like their imagination to be stimulated by such works as *Prince Igor* and (in another way) *Madame Butterfly* and the sadism of the standard blood and murder Italian operas. Still others like to listen to a prettily turned tune as in *La Traviata*. I do not know which way the graph for Wagner tends to go, but for reasons which we shall discuss later he appears to have certain attributes essential to radio opera. Then there is the lyric type—*Louise*, *Pelleas et Melisande*, *L'Heure Espagnole*—which require, nay, demand, articulation and balance of well-nigh perfection. It was nice to hear the second work again; the recent performances of the first were spoilt by the fact that not a word and sometimes not even a sound could be detected from the singers. In the unexplored field, Roussel's *La Naissance de la Lyre* has all the essentials of stimulating opera—a study of the productions of the Paris Opéra and Opéra-Comique during the ten years preceding the war would provide sufficiency of novelty and interest.

The presentation of radio opera offers many points of discussion, principally that of language. There is a lot to be said for the theory that opera should be performed in the language of the country. This is unanswerable in principle, but in practice there are difficulties. German operas "go" into English quite well as a rule, but with French and Italian lyrical works the matter is not so easy. *Turandot* in English, and Pinkerton's query, "Milk-punch or whisky?" in *Madame Butterfly* strike coarsely on the ear, but in time one can get used to it. French, however, is such an essentially lightsome language when sung that translation loses much of the essentials. The translator must have the attributes of a musicianly librettist, because French accents so frequently come just where the English ones do not. If we are to enjoy *L'Heure Espagnole* to the full we must listen to more than Ravel's wonderful score, and how can that be done by those who are not French conversationalists? To say that the ideal is the language in which the opera is written, therefore, must prevent the majority of people from full enjoyment, but this is the purist's angle. In any case the performance on the 29th December showed that French is the exceptional language in this respect because its very lightness made everything intelligible. On a larger scale, Dukas' *Ariane et Barbe-Bleu* would be equally satisfactory. Other languages are different. The B.B.C itself gave the answer in its transmission of *Danton's Death*, which, to those uninitiated into German, was a series of explosive noises. Where the eye is in use, difficulties of language are immediately

reduced because the stage action is usually sufficient to give clarity. When the ear only is in use, the whole situation is reversed unless the music is so graphic that it leaves no doubt, and this question is of the utmost significance where lyrical or declamatory opera is concerned. The purists took exception to Mozart in German at Covent Garden; would they have been similarly disgusted if it had been in English? Here we see the cleavage between radio and live opera, and the two cannot in any way be aligned because that for the radio is a specialized production.

IN radio opera we move from scene to scene, from incident to incident by means of a narrator, whose apologetic and confiding tones superimpose themselves upon the music, to its detriment. The voice jars on the musically attuned ear in the way that the voice of the person in front who will tell its neighbour what is going to happen next interrupts the flow in the theatre. Nevertheless, how else can it be put over? I do not think that sufficient credit is given to the imagination of the listener. If the listener knows concisely what is going to happen there should be no difficulty in following the events. The announcement before the work commences and before each act should be short and to the point; the bare bones, in fact. A good synopsis delivered with the weekly *Radio Times* for previous and simultaneous study would partially solve the problem. Years and years and years ago a very fine synopsis was on sale before a performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Kitesh*, which filled the bill admirably and gave all the necessary information to perfection. Radio opera is not such a frequent inclusion in the week's programmes as to mean that a constant flow of such booklets would result. To those who say that the majority of listeners would not bother to read the synopsis, the reply is the question of who listens to operas. Many, doubtless, know a certain aria and wait in anticipation for that glorious moment, but a vast number should, by now, be taking their opera seriously, and those who do not will not want to read the synopsis in detail and will be perfectly satisfied with their present attitude.

We have heard and read much about the fusion and interdependence of all the arts both in opera and ballet. We have read the writings of Richard Wagner on the subject. We have seen the small examples of this fusion in the operas of Benjamin Britten produced by the English Opera Group, where everyone is a "soloist". The experiment has succeeded in principle as well as in practice. The system is now in sufficient state for development on larger lines. We have seen that *The Rape of Lucretia* succeeded on the radio while *Albert Herring* did not—and the reason? It appears that one of the most essential features in the theatre is the least satisfactory on the radio—namely, movement. Action in the theatre relieves boredom when the composer's inspiration is not as lofty as he thought it was. Radio opera, therefore, would seem to demand staticism of locality and clear delineation of events. This was admirable in *The Rape of Lucretia*, where the "chorus" took the place of the narrator. In *Albert Herring* there was too much going on on the stage, and when the audience laughed we, in our chairs at home, just looked at each other This was emphasized by the performance of *L'Enfant et les sortileges* on the 29th December. There was too much action and too little music. The music underlined everything and was not sufficient to itself. The impression was rather that of listening to the sound track of a spasmodic film score without seeing the screen. A full-blooded opera should normally carry itself along on its own impulse, hence Verdi's *Otello* was thrilling in every way. This is more than can be said about *Peter Grimes* which lacks spontaneity and drive. The composer has indulged in too much recitative for his narrative and laid too great emphasis on masses of tone and jagged edges for his effects. We ought to have wept, but the sympathy was lacking. This I found to be the case in the theatre as well; I know I am in a minority in this respect but although perfectly willing to acknowledge its achievement, I cannot consider it the great work which others find it. The full-bloodedness which is necessary

for radio impulse can be found in Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* and Goossens' *Judith* (I cannot remember *Don Juan* well enough to commit myself on it).

Nevertheless, *Peter Grimes* was always intelligible on the radio which that charming opera *Louise* was not. This requires too much stage action, too many small points which demand explanation from a narrator to make it a really suitable opera for broadcasting. The sequel to this work, *Julien*, a failure on production as are most sequels to anything, might well succeed on the radio because it is more static. The characters are not histrionically strong enough to support two treatments and unless one knows *Louise*, her appearance in *Julien*, is completely unexplained. However, reading the score marks its radio points and if the music is not very eventful it is at least interesting and pleasant to listen to, which is probably all that its composer, Charpentier, intended it to be. Unlike *Louise*, it is not a very real social document.

Lalo's *Le Roi d'Ys* suggests itself for radio and, indeed, the French "lyrique" type of opera presents enormous possibilities. There is always plenty of music as against recitative or spoken dialogue. I do not think that the German romantic operas are very satisfactory save in one respect, and that is that we do not have to watch the stage absurdities. Romanticism of this nature is dated, but there is a necessity for Weber from the historic angle and he certainly bears revival better than would the operas previously mentioned.

Having remarked that the more the music the better the radio purpose, we can regard *Boris Godounov*, *Prince Igor* and *Eugene Onegin* as acceptable in every way and on the more, if not extremely serious side, Vincent d'Indy's *L'Etranger* and *Fervaal*, particularly the latter, which approaches near, although not actually reaching, the high level of *Parsifal* in manner and matter.

The reader by now may have guessed that I am leading up to the suggestion of a form of opera specially suited for radio, and this does not preclude production in the theatre.

The solution seems to lie in the Wagner *leit motiven*, unessential on the stage although an integral part of symphonic development. This was tried out in a radio production of Jean Paul Sartre's *Les Mouches*, when the producer, E. J. King Bull, and myself, as the composer, devised what we called a series of visiting cards (with due acknowledgement to Debussy) which dispensed with the narrator. For example, early in the play Zeus crosses and re-crosses the stage in silence. To have had a narrator butting in with "Zeus crosses the stage" while the characters were remarking that they had seen him—*i.e.*, Zeus—before would have been absurd in the situation. I wrote a very short theme for horn solo, only two bars, and played it backwards when Zeus re-crossed. *Naïve*, probably, but effective, and ere long the theme in question and the other themes duly imprinted themselves on the ear of the listener. Thus the music was thematic throughout and there were no "splurges of music" (thank you, Mr. Philip Hope-Wallace, for that) to underline any points. The music became part and parcel of the play and absolutely essential to its radio production. Similarly, in a verse-drama, *The Degradation of Guatemozin* by George Barker, I took the listener from the Aztec's camp to that of the Spaniards with music characteristic of the two races; the former was barbaric and miserable (as befitted the play), the latter stark, deliberately ecclesiastical, and at times commonplace, to fit in with the reality of the situations. The problem was solved easily in this way in both cases.

It is in something like this that the secret of radio opera lies. Opera must be composed specially for the medium, for there are few well-known works which fulfil the need. The process of composition would be very much like that of ballet, a round-the-table conference, and the composer would have to fall in with the views and suggestions of both producer and conductor. The radio opera would have either the visiting card underlay or the chorus, perhaps both, but the latter only when a situation tended to be obscure to the listener. Characters would come on and go off with some form of their particular "signature tune". There

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Having remarked that the more the music the better the radio purpose, we can regard *Boris Godounov*, *Prince Igor* and *Eugene Onegin* as acceptable in every way and on the more, if not extremely serious side, Vincent d'Indy's *L'Etranger* and *Fervaal*, particularly the latter, which approaches near, although not actually reaching, the high level of *Parsifal* in manner and matter.

The reader by now may have guessed that I am leading up to the suggestion of a form of opera specially suited for radio, and this does not preclude production in the theatre.

The solution seems to lie in the Wagner *leit motiven*, unessential on the stage although an integral part of symphonic development. This was tried out in a radio production of Jean Paul Sartre's *Les Mouches*, when the producer, E. J. King Bull, and myself, as the composer, devised what we called a series of visiting cards (with due acknowledgement to Debussy) which dispensed with the narrator. For example, early in the play Zeus crosses and re-crosses the stage in silence. To have had a narrator butting in with "Zeus crosses the stage" while the characters were remarking that they had seen him—*i.e.*, Zeus—before would have been absurd in the situation. I wrote a very short theme for horn solo, only two bars, and played it backwards when Zeus re-crossed. *Naïve*, probably, but effective, and ere long the theme in question and the other themes duly imprinted themselves on the ear of the listener. Thus the music was thematic throughout and there were no "splurges of music" (thank you, Mr. Philip Hope-Wallace, for that) to underline any points. The music became part and parcel of the play and absolutely essential to its radio production. Similarly, in a verse-drama, *The Degradation of Guatemozin* by George Barker, I took the listener from the Aztec's camp to that of the Spaniards with music characteristic of the two races; the former was barbaric and miserable (as befitted the play), the latter stark, deliberately ecclesiastical, and at times commonplace, to fit in with the reality of the situations. The problem was solved easily in this way in both cases.

It is in something like this that the secret of radio opera lies. Opera must be composed specially for the medium, for there are few well-known works which fulfil the need. The process of composition would be very much like that of ballet, a round-the-table conference, and the composer would have to fall in with the views and suggestions of both producer and conductor. The radio opera would have either the visiting card underlay or the chorus, perhaps both, but the latter only when a situation tended to be obscure to the listener. Characters would come on and go off with some form of their particular "signature tune". There

might be a future for the "I go, but to return anon" type of thought! Absurd though this seems, it might well become an integral part of radio technique if not abused.

HOWEVER, most important of all is the question of production. I have a feeling that the control-room does not take the ordinary commercial set into consideration. I mean the kind of reasonable set which you and I maintain, not the small portable variety which cannot be expected to carry everything. The dubbing is done to perfection and the result invariably sounds magnificent on the loud speakers of the B.B.C.; but when we get to the set in question, too often the balance is bad and the music hovers uncertainly in the background. Do the programme engineers try out on a commercial set? I doubt it. This is obvious not only with the incidental music to plays but with the production of opera. The voices either fight a losing battle with the orchestra or appear to give up altogether. Too much emphasis is placed on the orchestra. One can see this difference in comparison of the theatre with the studio. In the former the sunken orchestral pit allows the voices to soar above it. In the studio it depends on a knob and a microphone. Over and over again one hears the singers as at a distance. This is probably unavoidable, since none of the operas were composed for this medium. *The Compleat Radio Opera* would do away with this difficulty. It would be scored in such a way that the voices would never be overpowered by the orchestra and the times when the singers would be battling against the full blare would be few and far between. The composer would have to put the theatre out of his mind and substitute the control-room. The singers would thus have more time and opportunity to think about clarity of diction and less about their "forte".

I do not think that the type of subject matters very much. Both drama and comedy broadcast well, but there are dangers in the latter. Opera must mean something or else it becomes pantomime. Fun and frolics are all very well, but they are not capable by themselves of adding to the repertoire. We may laugh at *Figaro* and his counterpart in *The Barber of Seville*, and these are funny on the radio if the recitative is cut out and the spoken word substituted. On the other hand, portentiousness on the radio is as boring as it is in the theatre, as is pomposity in any form. The suggested radio opera must be significant in all its details, and while it is not necessary that every masterpiece must be on a big scale in order to be a masterpiece, there seems every reason to think that radio should be the means of producing an opera which can take its place in the history of music and the panorama of the genre as well as those written specifically for the theatre. A way seems to be indicated in the nature of Honegger's *Jeanne d'Arc*, which combines the substances of opera and dramatic oratorio.

It remains to be seen how William Walton and Christopher Hassal will approach the matter in what will be the first radio commissioned opera, in this country at any rate.

*Theatre*

# EDINBURGH FESTIVAL AND A MASTERPIECE

BY HUBERT GRIFFITH

THE TREE ESTATES, by Sir David Lindsay. (*Edinburgh.*)

ANDROCLES AND THE LION, by Bernard Shaw. (*Edinburgh.*)

RAIN ON THE JUST, by Peter Watling. (*Aldwych.*)

AN ENGLISH SUMMER, by Ronald Adam. (*Lyric, Hammersmith.*)

"LADIES, DON'T LISTEN!" by Sacha Guitry. (*St. James's.*)

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA. (*Sadler's Wells.*)

THERE is something very pleasant about *not* setting up in business as an authority on the history of the English stage.

It means that one doesn't mind pleading ignorance. One remains unblushing. It means that one can even ask questions of one's audience (or readers) without shame.

I therefore unblushingly ask this question, and would be genuinely grateful for, and enlightened by, an answer:—

Was there, in English contemporary drama, any figure even remotely comparable with Scotland's Sir David Lindsay, whose play, "*The Three Estates*," was one of the chief glories of the recent Edinburgh Festival (of International Music and Drama, with the nations of the world assembled at it)?

Sir David Lindsay wrote it and had it produced in 1540—that is to say, at least half a century before Shakespeare was ever heard about—while Peel and Greene and Nash and other minor Elizabethans were floundering about either in idyllic lyrics or in bloodthirsty slaughterhouses, trying to work out a formula that Marlowe (and afterwards Shakespeare) should forge into English blank verse.

Sir David Lindsay's play owes nothing to any of these. It is founded on much earlier (even medieval) English miracle and morality plays—the Chester "Nativity Play", and so forth. Its chief characters are "Solace" and "Wantonness", and "Flatterie" and "Gude Counsel", and a "King Humanitie" and a "Lady Sensualitie", and the rest of the tribe of personified virtues and vices.

But instead of being merely a recapitulation of an ancient legend (with incidental contemporary trimmings, as with the morality plays) it is a vehement, biting, and wrath-arousing satire on contemporary politics.

The "Three Estates" of the title are respectively the Church, shown as dominating everything; the Lords, and the Burghesses, or merchants. "The poor people of the realm also appear unbidden." (I quote from Mr. Tyrone Guthrie's altogether admirable introduction.)

A King is in process of taking advice from such bad councillors as "Flatterie". A Bishop is seen casting flowers into the lap of the "Lady Sensualitie". And into their midst strides a figure named "John the Common-Weal", played with power and passion by a Scots actor of the name of Archie Duncan.

He reviles everyone present; demands a full share in the government; and alleges that the Three Estates are being led by *Flatterie*, *Falsehood*, and *Deceit*. "A full-scale attack is launched, and vigorously met, by the leaders of the Church, to whom Sir David Lindsay allows some spirit but no reasonable arguments." (I quote from the same source.)

In the end, John the Common-Weal "is presented with a gay garment—a sort of Labour peerage", amid popular acclamation. "Spitirualitie" (the false Church) and others are submitted to physical humiliation.

"Proceedings are brought to a cheerful close by the public execution of *Falsehood* and *Deceit*."

And there you have the play!—played before about fifteen hundred people nightly at the Assembly Hall (the traditional assembly hall of the Church of Scotland) on the slope leading up to the Castle.

Even brought up to date by a contemporary author it needs all your ears to follow it, and a little comprehension and sympathy. The dismissal of the audience before the first interval:—

"*Also I mak you oxhortion.*
*Since ye have heard the first part of our play,*
*Go, tak ane drink, and mak collation;*
*Ilk man drink to his marrow, I you pray.*
*Tarry nocht lang, it is late in the day.*
*Let some drink ale, and some drink claret wine;*
*By great Doctors of Physick I hear say*
*That michty drink comforts the dull ingyne!*"

One gathers, after due thought, that the dull "ingyne" probably implies the digestive processes.

The play was magnificently and imaginatively produced by Mr. Tyrone Guthrie, and —as I have hinted—"walked away with" the Festival. It should be brought to London.

Sir David Lindsay was apparently in good favour with the authorities. He became an Ambassador, and Lyon King of Armes in the College of Heralds. In 1558 the Scottish Clergy were so enraged by his play that they ordered it to be burned by the public executioner. But as he was by then dead three years this didn't hurt him much.

I return to my original question:—who, in England, at that time—long, long, long pre-Shakespearean, *was* writing any sort of play that was sufficiently advanced (or reckless) as to have a bearing on contemporary politics? You may know of many. I know of none. Please write me your answers if you know any.

ANOTHER good memory of the Edinburgh Festival was of an often-forgotten Shaw play, "*Androcles and the Lion.*"

Until I saw it again, produced by the Children's Glyndebourne Theatre (directed mainly at children, but with adults packing the audiences of the Edinburgh Gateway Theatre) I had forgotten what a lovely play it was.

It is one of the shortest of all the Shaw plays—and it is something of a miracle in itself to find a short play by Shaw.

It is light and gay and amusing—but has something of the purest truth of religion in it. When Shaw makes Lavinia, his Christian martyr, say to the Roman Captain: "Religion is such a great thing that when I meet really religious people we are friends at once, no matter what name we give to the divine will that makes us and moves us. Oh, do you think that I, a woman, would quarrel with you for sacrificing to a woman god like Diana, if Diana meant to you what Christ means to me? No: we could kneel side by side before her altar like two children"—this seems to me to show that G.B.S. is a truly religious man.

The play, with Vivienne Bennett as the only London "star" in it, and Mr. Peter Allen as the producer, was beautifully acted by a young company, and I think it is about time that it again came to London.

THERE have been two London plays of what seem to me of first-rate eminence and priority:—I refer to young Mr. Peter Watling's "*Rain on the Just*" at the Aldwych, and not-so-young Mr. Ronald Adam's "*An English Summer*" at the Lyric, Hammersmith.

The first, "*Rain on the Just*," shows that he can build up character, and evoke situation. One does not know what is going to happen to the Corbel family in their great and largely unwanted country-house—but one is *interested* to know what is going to be the next move. There are depths and subtleties in the unwinding of the situation. (To say that it recalls "The Cherry Orchard" is merely to say that it is about a great English country-house, and the disintegration of a family. It is much nearer to Chechov in that it draws real types and real characters, and keeps our attention fixed on

them. There is an outstanding performance from Miss Marie Ney.)

The Ronald Adam offering, "*An English Summer*," is an intensely personal one. Mr. Ronald Adam was an operational pilot in the 1914 war. Twenty years later, he was a senior "Controller" officer in a Battle of Britain fighter-station—that is to say, someone who had to judge exactly when and where to send up young men to their deaths.

Because he had done exactly the same himself (personally) he knew exactly what were the risks involved. Hence the difficulties of the judgments. Apart from a few emotional superficialities, a profound and a moving play.

Leslie and Sewel Stokes' play, "*Oscar Wilde*," has been revived at the small Boltons Theatre in Kensington, with Mr. Frank Pettingell in the part made famous by Mr. Robert Morley at the Gate Theatre several years before the last war.

For those of us who are interested in artistry rather than in morals, the whole question turned on whether Mr. Pettingell in the name-part could hold a candle to the memory of what Mr. Morley had made of the part. Actually, he could. There are some people who would say that he was even better.

At any rate, the play once again comes across the footlights not only as a deeply fascinating play, but as a deeply moral play. Is not vice chastised to the ultimate degradation? Does not Wilde die in Paris as a dipsomaniac who cannot recognize his own best friends?

And yet a gleam of satanic laughter occasionally breaks through:—Cross-examining Counsel: "What do you think of Dickens, Mr. Wilde?" Wilde: "Truly one must have a heart of stone to be able to read the Death of Little Nell without laughter."

All very wrong, and all very corrupt, and I must admit that I felt I should have disapproved as I listened. But actually I stayed, and was amused, and edified.

If there is any nonsense about the Censor not licensing this play for public performance in the west-end of London, then it is the Censor (or his authoritative assistant) who should get sacked.

SACHA GUITRY'S "*Ladies, Don't Listen*," at the St. James's, is about the dullest of the fifty (or five hundred and fifty) plays that he has ever written.

It is all about ladies and gentlemen leaping in and out of bed together. Shades of the man who wrote "Pasteur"! Shades of the man who once treated sex realistically and intelligently, and wrote "*Le Veilleur de Nuit!*"

Sacha in his old age has become a bore!

A NEW version of "*The Beggar's Opera*" has appeared, young Mr. Benjamin Britten's, at Sadler's Wells.

This is entirely as it should be. "The pattern of the egg and dart cannot be repeated, and Columbus himself cannot rediscover America." In other words, a revival of the enchanting twenty years ago Lovat Fraser—Frederick Austin version of the play would have been an anachronism. It could not have had the smoothness produced by the first ideally-suited cast; it would have disillusioned the young, and probably been a disappointment to the middle-aged. A new young composer was completely welcome to have a fresh go at it.

And a fine go at it he has had! I found his re-settings — complicated and perverse enough to have made Frederick Austin's hair stand on end—both interesting and exciting.

But there all excitement ended. Mr. Tyrone Guthrie's production was extremely dark—a mannerism much affecting Mr. Guthrie these days. I know that a Hogarthian ghoulishness was being aimed at, and do not resent it in principle. But it was boring to look at for a whole evening. And the dashing Captain Macheath was played by Mr. Peter Pears with an affectation of modern effeminacy that I (personally) found completely revolting.

# THE DOLLAR PROSPECT

By W. MANNING DACEY*

THE basic economic fact of life to-day, as every schoolboy must surely know, is a worldwide shortage of dollars. Last year, the merchandise exports of the United States exceeded imports by the magnificent sum of eleven billion dollars. To the extent of six and a half billion, the gap was bridged by American loans and gifts on an unprecedented scale, but even so the outside world was left with substantial dollar requirements to be financed by some means other than current exports to the United States. Hence, a considerable strain was imposed on the straitened liquid reserves of many other countries, substantial quantities of gold being added to the two-thirds of the world's monetary gold stock which for many years has lain buried in Fort Knox.

Not only was the non-dollar world subjected to this pressure; it was shared also by many countries within the dollar area itself, such as Canada and Argentina. Nor was the dollar shortage a limiting factor only in trade between the dollar area and the outside world. It threatened even to strangle trade between countries outside the dollar area altogether, such as the nations of Western Europe. The former belligerents, all in various degrees in the grip of inflation, were anxious that their exports should not go "unrequited" but bring in equivalent imports. With the United States as virtually the only source of many products in acute demand—food as well as capital equipment—this meant that any European country would require the proceeds of its export surplus, beyond a modest limit, to be convertible into dollars, as a necessary step towards convertibility into goods; and, dollars being in short supply, a deflationary spiral in intra-European trade was—and remains—a real danger that could not be averted altogether by the network of bilateral agreements.

EVERYBODY agrees that the present acute and massive scarcity of dollars must be a passing phenomenon of the immediate post-war phase. It has been the product of many special factors: of the dislocation of European industrial production by the war; the severance of the European economy by the Iron Curtain, cutting off from the industrial West the normal export surplus of grain and other primary products from the Balkans; the resultant greatly increased reliance on imports from North America and, not least, the sharp rise in the prices of primary commodities produced by this external demand superimposed on boom levels of demand within the United States itself. But when the acute post-war dollar famine has been relieved, what then? Once the crisis is past, will the disease cure itself? Or will the acute phase of the disease merely pass over into a chronic phase of indefinite duration?

*THE ECONOMIST* has recently argued strongly for the latter diagnosis. "It seems overwhelmingly probable," we are told, "that the dollar shortage will last for a generation to come." Any idea that, even after the transition phase, the nations will be able to balance their accounts with the United States by adjustments of currency values, tariff levels or wage rates is apparently an extremely naïve view which *The Economist* would charitably hestitate to attribute to anybody except Americans. The shrewd and realistic European, on the other hand, knows that it is all "a simple matter of geography". Currency problems did not exist in the nineteenth century because Britain, the dominant economic country, was an island, compelled (*sic*) to buy its food and raw materials abroad. The United States, however, being a continent, with no compelling reason to purchase supplies overseas, there must always be a dollar shortage and hence Europe must "do painfully by planning and controlling and even discriminating what could once be left to unfettered free trade".

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In short, geo-economics seems to be about as thorough a muddle and to lead to just as sinister conclusions as geo-politics. Even in these degenerate days, fortunately, there are some Europeans with sufficient common sense to avoid this kind of defeatism, to share with the naïve Americans the belief that in the price system we still have a mechanism capable of maintaining equilibrium even in such a matter as the supply of dollars, provided the nations are intelligent enough to use it. For if one thing is quite certain it is that relationships between currencies even in the twentieth century are not and never can be "a simple matter of geography". Not possessing a thing is not in the least the same thing as being "compelled" to buy it abroad, as any adult Englishman must know who would like to buy a banana. If there was no scarcity of sterling in the nineteenth century it was not for the simple geographical reason that Britain is an island but for the economic reason that Britain adopted policies consistent with an expanding world economy. High protection coupled with a prohibition on the export of capital—in other words, economic insularity—could quite effectively have prevented the nineteenth century burgeoning of international trade, notwithstanding Britain's admittedly propitious insularity in the geographic sense. Similarly, one cannot believe the doctrine of comparative costs is so meaningless that the geo-physical situation of the United States would alone be sufficient to rule out a fair volume of trade provided that the United States were following the appropriate commercial and financial policies and that the dollar was allowed to find its appropriate level in terms of other currencies.

WHETHER or no that presumption is justified, the volume of prospective trade is in any case quite beside the point in assessing whether we must anticipate a chronic dollar shortage. For there will only be a shortage of dollars or any other currency—it will only be a "hard" currency—if at the prevailing levels of exchange rates the dollar purchases of other countries tend to *exceed* the amount of dollars that the United States makes available by her imports from other countries, by overseas lending or by outright gifts such as the Marshall grants. In other words, a "hard" currency or a currency in short supply is precisely the same thing as a currency which is under-valued; for however small the volume of dollars made available by American importing, lending and giving, there must be *some* rate for the dollar—for example, one dollar to the pound—which will restrict the purchases of the outside world from the United States to the supply of dollars so made available.

It is quite true that if in fact the United States is not a large buyer from the outside world, for whatever reason, then the volume of American external trade as a whole will be small. For it is only in the short run that the outside world can finance purchases from the United States by drawing on its liquid reserves; in the long run American exports necessarily equal American imports plus loans and gifts. If America is importing freely and lending liberally, then equilibrium will be established with trade at a high level. In the converse case, equilibrium will be established with a small volume of trade. But the point is that in either event equilibrium *can* be established if rates of exchange are fixed at the correct level given the prevailing levels of tariffs and prices. All that is affected by the difference between expansive American policies and restrictive American policies is the question whether a high rate for the dollar or a low rate is needed to achieve balance and prevent a dollar scarcity.

NOW at this point it may be objected that we have taken an unduly narrow and technical view of the matter, that in speaking of a prospective shortage of dollars for a generation to come *The Economist* meant only that the United States cannot be expected to follow policies consistent with a high volume of external trade, so that only a limited supply of dollars will be made available to the outside world. That interpretation, however, does not fit the argument. The writer clearly meant that in addition to the physical supply of dollars

being limited the dollar will also be undervalued in terms of all other currencies. Only on that assumption does any justification for discrimination arise. However small the supply of dollars, provided the *price* of dollars in terms of other currencies is fixed high enough, not only need there be no dollar shortage but also there is no reason why other countries should not trade on the same terms with the United States as with each other—a point that obviously has direct relevance to the vexed issue of Empire Preference. No matter how great the technical efficiency of the United States, this will not (given an equilibrium rate for the dollar) permit her exporters to under-sell the exporters of other countries in everything; on the contrary, given such a rate the United States will only be able to export as much as she imports, lends or gives away.

In fact, the contention that we must henceforth do by planning, controlling or discriminating what could hitherto be left to free trade is a statement unsupported by any logical foundation. It is true that American policies tending to limit the volume of her external trade, such as prohibitive tariffs, would be a great menace to the future of the Western world, retarding its recovery and perhaps even undermining its viability as compared with the world behind the Iron Curtain. But if in fact the United States is misguided enough to import very little and to restrict her overseas loans and gifts, then we must accept the fact that only a limited volume of American goods will be available to the outside world in any event. The price system (specifically the fixing of correct exchange rates) and discrimination are merely alternative methods of achieving the *same* object, namely to restrict the demands of the outside world on the American economy to the size of the export surplus which the United States is in fact prepared to finance by gifts and/or loans.

NO doubt the further objection will be raised that if the available supply of dollars is likely to be small, then the outside world will be compelled to adopt discrimination and controls in order to restrict their purchases from the United States to "essentials" and prevent their nationals from buying American "luxuries" until all the demands for essentials have been met. But that is a point which has relevance neither to American policies, nor to the possibility of fixing equilibrium rates, but solely to the internal financial policies of the non-dollar world. If other countries, including our own, persist in paying out with one hand large money incomes,and then with the other hand preventing those incomes from being spent because the general monetary situation is inflationary and demand everywhere exceeds supply, then naturally there is the same case for controls in international trade as there is for rationing in our internal affairs. But if such countries will cure their internal inflation and not seek to push the egalitarian redistribution of real income beyond the limits that can be achieved through highly progressive taxation, then the case for discrimination and controls in the external field will melt away side by side with that for rationing as an inefficient substitute for the price system in our internal affairs.

So much by way of attempting to clarify the issues involved. To what conclusions do these considerations lead us? Should we or should we not expect the dollar to be undervalued for a generation to come? Surely nobody, including *The Economist*, can do more than hazard a tentative guess at the answer, since this depends on so many factors which are as yet undecided. What is certain is that a perpetually under-valued dollar should not be taken for granted. Once the post-war transition period, with its abnormal demand for American goods and its inflationary drag on non-American exports, has been completed, then it may once again seem reasonable to conclude, as Lord Keynes suggested in his posthumous article, that "the chances of the dollar becoming dangerously scarce in the course of the next five to ten years are not very high".

THE actual course of events must depend to a great extent on the wisdom and influence of that as yet largely untried institution, the International Monetary Fund. Admittedly, this has not accomplished anything very startling in its first two years, but

it may be doubted whether that is conclusive. The whole purpose of Bretton Woods was to keep exchange rates at their proper levels, and at present nobody wants a correct level for the most important currency of all. For the time being, the whole world is ready to connive at an under-valued level for the dollar because we all want a large United States export surplus on as favourable terms as possible, and are content to treat as a secondary problem (temporarily solved by Marshall Aid) the methods of financing it. In other words, the conditions simply do not yet exist in which Bretton Woods could be expected to function as its authors intended. But when more normal conditions return in which equilibrium rates of exchange will be a necessary condition of expanding international trade, then the Bretton Woods institution will really be on trial. Certainly, the dollar prospect depends much more on how the Fund survives this coming test than on such incidentals as the facts of geography.

# A SAILOR TO APHRODITE

P aphian allow my tender servitude
H owever far your roses be and doves;
Y ours is the temple where my gratitude
L ies stored in custody of laughing Loves,
L ies sanctified my constant worship proves.
I sail away to distant seas—serene?
S erene or perilous . . . Remain, my Queen.

C. B. FRY.

# NOTES FROM OVERSEAS

EIRE has been much in the news during the past few weeks owing to the visits of Mr. Attlee and several of his colleagues, who have not unnaturally sought there relief from the austerities which they take such obvious delight in imposing upon their fellow-countrymen in the United Kingdom.

If one were to judge Irish opinion by the columns of the Dublin newspapers, and by the speeches of the politicians of all parties, it would be to arrive at the conclusion that the burning issue of the day is the ending of Partition. In actual fact nothing could be further from the truth, and it is possible to travel from one end of the country to the other, mixing with every section of the population, without hearing the subject mentioned at all.

What has happened is that Mr. de Valera, having been turned out of office at the General Election earlier in the year, looked round for a stick wherewith to belabour his victorious opponents, and he found one in the abuses of Partition. The new Taoiseach, Mr. Costello, at once grasped what was at stake, and he was determined not to allow the Opposition to get away with so attractive a slogan; accordingly his followers began to shout the odds just as loudly as those of Mr. de Valera, and the present agitation is the result. The proposal to repeal the External Relations Act of 1936 is due to precisely the same causes.

Now Northern Ireland has joined in, and from Fair Head in Antrim to Mizzen Head in Cork the Press and the platform are volleying forth arguments for and against the continuance of Partition, for all the world as if the ordinary citizen were really interested.

THE situation is not without its comic side, for the Border has created economic interests which very often clash with religious and political loyalties. For example, under British rule Derry was the commercial centre for Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, and Cavan, but since the Treaty its place has to no inconsiderable extent been taken by Sligo: the result is that to-day there is more than one Orangeman in Derry who would privately welcome the end of Partition, while in Sligo it is not difficult to find Republicans who would, equally privately, deplore the unification of Ireland.

The only man who is likely to unite the country lives neither in Dublin nor in Belfast, but in Moscow, and his name is Joseph Stalin. Eire and Northern Ireland are at one in their opposition to Communism and the Russian menace, and if war, or the immediate threat of war, should materialize there would be a co-operation of North and South which would be more than likely to develop into something permanent.

ANOTHER great feature of the past few weeks has been the celebration of the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the rising of 1798, and there can be very few towns or villages in Eire which have not reeked of rhetoric and porter in commemoration of this event. Whatever view one may take of the rising itself it is always a good thing that the past should be remembered, for as Edmund Burke, himself an Irishman, said, "A nation that never looks back to its ancestors will never look forward to posterity."

One aspect in particular of these celebrations is encouraging, and it is that in the great majority of cases anglophobia was conspicuous by its absence, except for some letting off of steam on the subject of Partition. Historically, the events of 1798 in the main constituted an Irish civil war in which relatively few Englishmen took part, but they have for so long been portrayed as the uprising of a nation rightly struggling to be free that it is reassuring to find them viewed in a more correct perspective. However that may be, the anniversary of them has not been used to create bad blood between England and Ireland.

On the other hand, the demolition of the statue of Queen Victoria in Dublin at a moment when the city was full of English visitors could hardly be described as tactful; while the proposal to remove Nelson from his column in O'Connell Street shows a lack of historical imagination when it is remembered that the great sailor and the Irish people held the Revolution of 1688 in equal detestation.

MR. COSTELLO'S administration seems to be seated firmly in the saddle, and outside Fianna Fail circles one hears few regrets for its predecessor, however much respect there may be for Mr. de Valera personally. The Opposition has not shown to much advantage in the Dail, and Mr. de Valera, like Mr. Winston Churchill, in not dissimilar circumstances, is displaying a marked distaste for the everyday routine of Parliamentary life, whereas Mr. Costello has gained in stature enormously since he took office. His ministers, too, are proving for the most part shrewd and competent administrators.

Economy is the order of the day, and if this has displeased a few people it has reassured a great many more. The nationalism of Fianna Fail was flamboyant and therefore expensive, and there can be no doubt that the new Government has the people behind it in eschewing such luxuries as a trans-Atlantic aeroplane service and a further wireless station. It is true that there is considerable bitterness in Opposition circles with the way in which the Coalition was formed, but in the country as a whole very little politics is talked, and that is usually a sign of satisfaction.

Nevertheless there is one great problem that will some day have to be dealt with, and the solution is not likely to prove either easy or pleasant. How long can a small peasant state last with a capital out of all proportion to the rest of the country both in size and standard of living? For the moment this fact is obscured by the amount of money being spent by English visitors, but this source of supply is neither permanent nor unlimited. When it comes to an end, or shows signs of serious diminution, a first-class crisis is likely to be at hand. Perhaps the best argument in favour of the unification of Ireland is that it would restore the economic balance of the island.

# LITERATURE AND CRITICISM

Edited by HUGH KINGSMILL

## "OSCAR WILDE'S FAIRY GODMOTHER"

LAST September (1947) Hesketh Pearson and I, visiting Oxford for the day, entered Brasenose College, and stopping an alert and genial-looking young man, who seemed to be in his late twenties, asked him if he knew whereabouts in the college Walter Pater had lived. "I don't belong here," he said, "but my friend may be able to tell you." He indicated a youth who was walking along on the far side of the quadrangle, and raising his voice shouted, "I say, where did Walter Pater have his rooms? You know—Oscar Wilde's fairy godmother." Curtly, in rather exasperated tones, the other shouted back that he didn't know. Apologizing to our would-be helper for having raised an uncongenial topic, and he having deprecated our regrets with undiminished amiability, we went on our way, grateful for a most felicitous and illuminating phrase, though a little stunned at the thought of Walter Pater's feelings could he have foreseen that on a quiet afternoon in autumn, towards the middle of the twentieth century, such an epitome of his days and works, so lacking in fine gradations, so imperfectly adjusted to its pretended subject, would be bellowed across the quadrangle of his own college.

The ordinary human god-parent is among the least helpful of mankind. To turn to a godfather or a godmother when in trouble is one of the last things a man does before hitching a rope to a convenient hook. Yet it is better not to be helped at all than to be helped ostensibly for one's own sake but really to fulfil one's benefactor's desires. Does anyone suppose that Cinderella's fairy godmother, if she could have got the prince for herself, would have exhausted the resources of her occult equipment to get him for Cinderella? Cut off from human intercourse, but a prey to human cravings, she could gratify her social and sexual appetites only by proxy. Cinderella was the agent through whom the old fairy enjoyed a handsome and royal youth, vanishing when the first raptures were over, and leaving Cinderella to decline through disillusion and disenchantment into the long misery of a loveless union with (if I have my facts correct) the most brutal and profligate of husbands.

There is an obvious analogy between fairy tales and false philosophies, for every false philosophy is an imagination of a world propitious to irrational demands and unregulated desires. The false philosopher's dream infects someone in closer touch than himself with everyday experience, this agent of his desire seeks to translate the dream into reality, and disaster follows. It is the Cinderella story in actual life. Rousseau was Robespierre's fairy godmother, Karl Marx was Lenin's, Nietzsche was Hitler's; and Walter Pater, as the quadrangle of Brasenose is now aware, was Oscar Wilde's.

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In the introduction to his ample and skilful selection from Walter Pater's writings,* Mr. Richard Aldington refers rather sourly to Wilde as Pater's "most notorious disciple". But, after all, it was Wilde not Pater who did two years' hard, and if the Old Bailey in 1895 was foreshadowed in the æsthetic doctrines promulgated by Pater in 1873, sympathizers with Wilde would seem quite as entitled to a sense of grievance as admirers of Walter Pater.

Æstheticism is materialism in its most rarefied form. The æsthete, no less than the seeker after power or wealth, has to be nourished by external things, to be stimulated by sensations pursued in the outside world not by feelings rising spontaneously within. Poets are not æsthetes. An object is beautiful to them if it answers to an inner feeling; otherwise it does not exist. In their surroundings what they value most is enough comfort to enable them to forget where they are. Very little comfort will achieve this end for some poets. A visitor to Blake and his wife wrote: "I had the felicity of seeing this happy pair in their one apartment in South Molton Street. The bed on one side and a picture of Alfred and the Danes on the wall." Beethoven was even less superfine than Blake, it being his habit when heated by composition to pour a jug of water over his head, and to be both surprised and indignant when the landlord rushed up from below to demand that the cascade under which he was sitting should be dammed at its source. Wordsworth, if he was reading a book at tea, would cut the leaves with a knife he had just used for buttering the toast. I do not applaud these practices. I merely adduce them in order to make clear that poet and æsthete are not synonymous terms.

The æsthete is all circumference and no centre. Maimed at the heart of his being, he conceives a universe as sick as himself; unable to divine order, he denies that order exists. All that is left to him is the titillation of his sensibilities, which he claims to be the sole rational employment in an otherwise meaningless existence. In the conclusion to *The Renaissance*, which appeared in 1873 and became the bible of the æsthetic movement, Walter Pater approved what he called the growing tendency of modern thought to regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions. Life was merely a stream of impressions, and "every one of these impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. . . . While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems, by a lifted horizon, to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange flowers, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend". The symbol Pater chose to enforce his view that there are no absolute values, and that all kinds of experience can flourish freely side by side, was Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, in whose face he read a message, indecipherable by anyone else, the purport of which was that she had sipped the essence of ten thousand experiences, had suckled Helen of Troy and the mother of the Virgin Mary, had sampled the animalism of Greece and the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the Middle Ages and

*"Walter Pater : Selected Works." Edited by Richard Aldington. *Heinemann :* 21*s*.

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the sins of the Borgias; and all this had been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, though to a close scrutiny she might seem rather fatigued, for "the eyelids are a little weary".

Æstheticism inevitably gravitates towards tyranny. Exhausted by empty dreams, sick of self-love where the parched self becomes with each year more arid and tasteless, the æsthete in the end turns to the outside world not for fresh sensations but for the order he cannot find within himself. The former anarchist calls for an overriding authority, the denier of order in the universe demands the strictest order on earth. He may desire to wield authority himself, like Stefan George with his circle of youthful narcissists, who in due course became Nazis. He may, like W. B. Yeats, be in such a state of confusion between unsatisfied lust and unsatisfied rage as to see in authority nothing but a shower of blows on bloody heads. Or, like Pater, mild and remote to the close, he may turn from Athens to Lacedæmon, that antique model of a totalitarian state, whose citizens, Pater notes, were not allowed to visit other lands—"No! Lacedæmon was in truth before all things an organized place of discipline, an organized opportunity also, for youth, for the sort of youth that knew how to command by serving—a constant exhibition of youthful courage, youthful self-respect, yet above all of true youthful docility; youth thus committing itself absolutely soul and body, to a corporate sentiment in its very sports."

The difference between Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater is suggested in Blake's saying—"If a fool would persist in his folly he would become wise." To suppose that a grand marriage will bring happiness is foolish, but it is better to marry a prince and weep, like Cinderella, than to dream about marrying a prince and have no tears to shed, like the fairy godmother. Wilde was a poet entangled with an æsthete by some inner malformation. The rich, vigorous nature which should have fed his genius was diverted into the service of the æsthete, and the sensations which Pater pursued in fancy Wilde tried to realize in fact. The sins of the Borgias as detailed at the Old Bailey had little indeed in common with the sins of the Borgias as delicately participated in by Mona Lisa to the sound of lyres and flutes. Yet because Wilde persisted in his folly, he enjoyed hours of freedom from his servitude such as Pater, in his weary coma, never knew. In these hours he was a wonderful being, kindly and magnanimous, healing and quickening, as high above the common level of men as in his other aspect he was below it. Wilde, the æsthete, was a medley of other people's unsifted and unassimilated tastes. Wilde, the poet, expressed himself through a humour which was at the same time sharpened by a clairvoyant insight into the incongruities of life and warmed and irradiated by an irresistibly happy and buoyant disposition.

HUGH KINGSMILL.

# POLITICS

THE TRIPLE CHALLENGE. By Francis Williams. *William Heinemann.* 10*s.* 6*d. net*

PARTY CHOICE. By Michael Berry. *Eyre and Spottiswoode.* 6*s. net*

MR. FRANCIS WILLIAMS was, until the end of last year, Mr. Attlee's Adviser on Public Relations. Before this, he had been editor of the *Daily Herald*, and was closely associated with Labour politics. In his last book, *Press, Parliament and People*, he provided an interesting account of his experiences as a journalist and public relations official, including the difficulties which sometimes arise in the relations between an editor of the *Daily Herald* and the T.U.C. which controls its policy. In *The Triple Challenge* he writes of the Labour Government, its domestic and foreign policy, as seen from Downing Street.

Mr. Michael Berry in *Party Choice* covers some of the same ground, but with the more modest object of clarifying his own thoughts. Like many of his generation, he found himself at the end of six years' military service much out of touch with politics and in the new climate of a Socialist electoral victory. So he set himself to do what few in the same case have had either the resolution or the industry to undertake. He decided to think the whole thing out from the beginning, testing against political and economic realities the claims which Labour Party propagandists had succeeded in persuading the public to take for granted. The result is a book written with great sincerity and unassuming ability, an invaluable handbook for the doubtful voter.

The great success of Socialist propaganda has been to put across concepts like State Planning and Public Ownership in such a way that their validity has come very largely to be taken for granted. To express scepticism about planning nowadays is rather like being sceptical about the fundamental dogmas of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages, or the sanctity of the home in the nineteenth century. It is not so much a mistake, or even ignorance, as an abominable blasphemy.

None the less, Mr. Berry ventures to question the fundamental premises of Socialist administration. He subjects them to a careful and telling analysis, demonstrating the spuriousness of many a hallowed old saying repeated at innumerable summer schools, on innumerable open-air platforms, and now incorporated in the authorized Party mystique.

Mr. Williams, on the other hand, is a zealous champion of the existing Socialist order. Authority may not always, as Acton said, corrupt, but it very soon produces a certain type of temperament. When the mighty are put down from their seats and the humble and meek exalted, it is quite remarkable how rapidly their humility and meekness disappears. Mr. Williams's basic proposition is that British Socialism represents a workable compromise between American free enterprise and Russian totalitarian Communism. He contends, therefore, that Mr. Attlee and his colleagues have been responsible for a social revolution of immense significance in the world. They have, he considers, pulled off the unique feat of laying the foundations of a Socialist State without restricting freedom. In this connection, Mr. Berry quotes a very characteristic remark Mr. Herbert Morrison made on 16th December, 1945: "We may find in planning, in fact we already have, that the cost of liberty will be the sacrifice of certain personal freedoms." As Mr. Berry points out, how a man gains liberty by sacrificing personal freedoms is not explained.

This Socialist liberty, purchased at the cost of personal freedoms, Mr. Williams believes and hopes will continue to broaden down from precedent to precedent even though, as a result of the natural fluctuations of public opinion, the Conservative Party should one day again win an election. It is because of the Labour Government's success in this respect, Mr. Williams contends, that it has become the particular target of Russian propaganda. It is not, he considers, that the Russians feel that British power has been so weakened that they may with impunity deride and attack it, but that they are afraid that Mr. Attlee's revolution may prove so successful that it will jeopardize Lenin's.

There is no need to doubt the sincerity of Mr. Attlee's fidelity to representative institutions and to the whole apparatus of political freedom in Western democracy, but it still

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might be possible, as Mr. Berry suggests, that, without knowing it, the Labour Party are in fact preparing the way for a totalitarian system. Kerensky was a zealous and sincere democrat, but it was on his shoulders that the Bolsheviks climbed into power. As the result of Soviet propaganda, it is now commonly believed that Lenin seized power from the Tzar, whereas, of course, in fact he seized it from an administration closely resembling that of Messrs. Attlee, Bevin, Morrison and Cripps.

Mr. Williams, I think, has some doubts about his own case. "Is what I have referred to as a revolution genuinely a revolution in the positive sense of the word?" he asks, "or is it merely the pathetic search of a tired people for social security at almost any cost and at almost any level?" Mr. Berry would say emphatically that was precisely what it was. "Have the British people lost their enterprise, their zest for life, even their willingness to work?" Mr. Williams goes on. "Do they seek merely a dim, equalitarian Utopia, fit only for the mediocre, in which initiative will die for lack of reward, and in which the power of a once great empire will fall away because the spirit that made it has departed? Is Britain finished as a Great Power, and the British revolution simply a fancy name for the listless acceptance by her people of the passing of former glory, with all the consequences upon world history that such a passing must have?" Unhappily, it looks very much that way at the moment, Mr. Berry indicates.

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE.

## MOST OF THE TRUTH

SWITCHBACK. An Autobiography. By Brian Lunn. *Eyre and Spottiswoode.* 15*s.*

THOSE content with the idea that a nature is no more than bilateral may declare that the two sides of Mr. Brian Lunn's nature are revealed in a youthful reminiscence of Grindelwald:

> Sometimes I put a lump of sugar on an ant-heap and watched them pick it to pieces and carry off the separate crystals, feeling a glow of satisfaction at having provided a mountain of provender for a large community. At other times I gratified myself by stirring up a heap with my boot, and watched the disconcerted insects scurrying hither and thither, some of them carrying the rice-like pupæ to safety.

This does indeed suggest two of his outstanding characteristics: an all-embracing, sometimes emotional compassion (he leaves the room in tears when a chance remark makes him realize that the patience and courage of his betrothed have recently been taxed far more than his own; and not long before he has been sympathizing with some logs, because their chance of a dignified old age is so small), and a taste for disconcerting people, of which this book itself is evidence. But something more like the real complexity of a human being emerges from *Switchback*, though here and there one does get the impression that the colours have been heightened because of a belief that since complete candour is always entertaining, the most entertaining explanation of an incident or a motive must be the truth.

I see something of a P. G. Wodehouse situation in the fact that one brother (who "has his full share", as the blurb says, "of the family literary skill and sense of humour") has written his life making such unrestricted use of early memories which must be common to two others whose autobiographies are to be expected. Admittedly, the point of view is important; but the great public may be assumed to be somewhat literal-minded, interested more in the circumstance itself than in its effect on the writer. However, it must also be admitted that the most striking examples of candour in Mr. Lunn's story concern incidents in later life, which to be sure involved other people (to put it mildly) but probably not other people who might wish to use them in print.

The most noticeable attribute of *Switchback* is certainly candour, but another reason for the book's distinctive flavour is a question of literary method: it reads like a diary skilfully rewritten. The author gives a perfectly straightforward account of his life, from his childhood (overshadowed at first, like that of so many other younger sons, by the "savage longing" to share the privileges of his brothers), through Westminster and Oxford and the 1914 war and the later vicissitudes of his father's travel-agency—as a director of this he was always hampered by a tendency to sympathize with the other party when his father was bargaining—to his marriage and his divorce, everything about which is described at length, even to the quoting in full of a long report on his wife's movements by a French detective. But what gives it all an individual charm is

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the way Mr. Lunn will pause at any moment in the narrative and describe something he saw at the time. He retains an enviably childlike interest in and pleasure in his surroundings, whether they are Swiss mountains or men working in a Paris street, and the constant scattering of such pictorial detail fills his pages with colour.

Childlike too is his constant, touching quest for reassurance and comfort. Disconcerting in one's own life he may be; but one gets the impression that the man who wrote this enjoyable book is still essentially like the small boy who was "much comforted" by seeing evidence of mutual devotion in his grandparents, as he was when he heard of the way in which the early Helvetians secured immunity from bears. RICHARD MALLETT.

## *Novels*

THE PLAGUE. Albert Camus. *Hamish Hamilton.* 9*s.* 6*d.*

THE IDES OF MARCH. Thornton Wilder. *Longmans.* 9*s.* 6*d.*

CATALINA. W. Somerset Maughan. *Heinemann.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

THE SKY AND THE FOREST. C. S. Forester. *Michael Joseph.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

GUS THE GREAT. Thomas W. Duncan. *Sampson Low.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

THE STORY OF MRS MURPHY. Natalie Anderson Scott. *Macdonald.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

ALBERT CAMUS'S second novel is the account of an outbreak of plague in the city of Oran. Prefaced by a quotation from Defoe it has the prototype's air of actuality and as with "*L'Etranger*" the power of the writing lends a delusive finality to the arguments. The opening of the book, from the first appearance of the dead rats to the confirmation of the state of plague is terrifying; the growth of the panic, the sequestration of the town and the gradual rallying of the human spirit against the pestilence is conveyed with a convincing authority. The narrator is a doctor, Bernard Rieux, the first to recognize the symptoms of the plague, the driving force of the struggle against it. Associated with him is a group of people; Tarrou, who had "lived a life riddled with contradictions and had never known the solace of hope"; Rambert, a journalist visiting Oran, who after frantically contriving an

illegal escape from the quarantined city, throws his chance away and remains to help; Grand, a petty clerk who is one day going to write the faultless masterpiece; Cottard, to whom the plague is a reprieve. Rieux and Tarrou represent the "élite", men without religion but inspired by the ideal of service to humanity. Religion, in the person of Father Paneloux, is soon, but not unsympathetically dismissed. The repeated failure of the attempt to give social vitality to the ideal of secular sanctity, once regretfully chronicled by Aldous Huxley in "Ends and Means", is frankly accepted by Monsieur Camus. Only "those whose desires are limited to man and his humble yet formidable love" can enter "if only now and again into their reward". "But for those others, who aspired beyond and above the human individual towards something they could not even imagine, there had been no answer."

Camus sees man as Sisyphus, the absurd hero, uselessly rolling a stone uphill. In "The Plague" he has given Sisyphus a purpose, but no hope. All that one may gain from the conflict between plague and life is knowledge and memories, can Sisyphus sit upon the stone? This is the old wisdom of the Preacher, the voice of experience and disillusion, that moves the heart but does not build bridges. The book is admirably translated, as usual, by Mr. Stuart Gilbert.

THE man who built bridges speaks, with the voice of Mr. Thornton Wilder, in "The Ides of March", the story of the last days of Julius Cæsar told in a series of letters which introduce, beside Cæsar, Cicero, Cleopatra, Marc Antony, Catullus and Clodia Pulcher, his Lesbia. I do not myself like the epistolatory method, one is too aware of conscious selection. But, though one may dispute the reading of the chief character, the picture of ancient Rome has life, authority and wit.

IT is difficult to know what Mr. Maughan intended in "Catalina". The opening chapters about the miracle by which the girl is cured of paralysis read like a satire by a kindlier Anatole France or is it a Shavian defence of supernatural phenomena? Catalina's struggles to preserve her chastity as far as the Church door are in the farcical mood of a mild *conte drolatique* and the end of the story dissolves into a dissertation

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about the sixteenth century Spanish theatre, I could not call this vintage Maughan.

THERE is no more reliable story teller in English than Mr. C. S. Forester, and "The Sky and the Forest" is of his best. It is the story of Loa, an African chieftain brought up to consider himself a god, but forced painfully to realize his common humanity when Arab slave traders raid his settlement and take him captive. His escape, his return to his village, the psychological effect of his experiences and the practical wisdom he manages to extract from them, are so skilfully told that the reader is compelled to go on to the clever and unexpected end. It is impossible to over praise this writer's story telling gift, his mastery of fact and detail, his complete realization of the nature of the man of action, whether he be an African savage or an English sailor.

"GUS THE GREAT" is a very large book, containing a wealth of detail about one of the most fascinating things in the world, the life of the circus. The Americans have enormous advantages over us in their fantastic variety of scene and people and the prodigious social changes encompassed in an ordinary life time. But they have adopted an "epic technique" for these vast romances, using overworked flashback devices which slow down the story and a standardization of character by type which congeals one's interest in the people. I could not imagine Augustus H. Burgoyne as a person, only as a film part, but I suspect this is all that was asked of me.

I COULD not get even as far as that with James Murphy, "hero" of "The Story of Mrs. Murphy". This is a low brow variant of "The Lost Week End" but extending, unhappily, over a long term of years. James is a pathological drunk with an irresistible appeal for women. The reader is told everything about his descent through bars, saloons, flophouses, hospitals and prisons to the Skidway, the last resort of hopeless and filthy drunks. In the smart-aleck caddishness alternating with sentimentality which is all that one is shown of James sober, it is difficult to find anything arousing sympathy. Nor does the author, in 440 pages of remorseless descriptions of physical squalour, throw any light on the vital question, *why* did James drink?

RUBY MILLAR.

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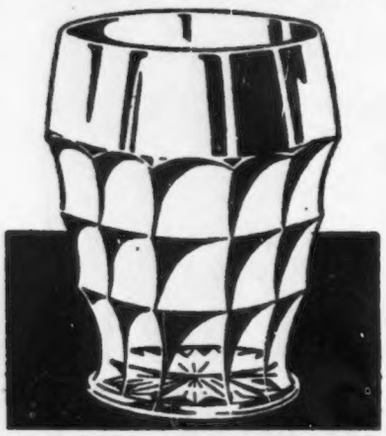

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## A GOOD SECOND-RATER

THE ART & LIFE OF WILLIAM JAMES MULLER. By Cyril G. E. Bunt. *Frederick Lewis Ltd.* £5 5*s.* 500 *copies numbered.*

WILLIAM MÜLLER has an assured place in the record of nineteenth century British Art but it is distinctly below that of many of his contemporaries. Like Girtin and Bonington he had a short life. He was only thirty-three when he died in 1845. Equipped from his boyhood with exceptional facility and energy, he devoted himself to his art and enjoyed considerable recognition and reward for his industry. Unlike Cotman, by whom he was greatly influenced, he was never burdened by lack of funds. He was able frequently to travel and to work abroad and much of his early success was due to these foreign tours.

Mr. Bunt's appreciation is a painstaking and conscientious study. It is clearly the work of a fervent and not always dispassionate admirer. He has, however, done well to draw fresh attention to the achievement of a gifted if limited artist. At his best Müller touched the creative heights but he was happier on the foothills where unusual dexterity so often passes for genius.

This book is a lavish production; perhaps a shade too elaborate for the importance of its subject. Of the nine colour plates the Antwerp Cathedral interior is the most impressive. Although the spirited drawings exhibit definite influences they proclaim Müller's remarkable powers as a graphic draughtsman when face to face with nature. The monochrome reproductions of Oriental paintings, with due deference to Mr. Bunt's opinion, reveal how commonplace his studio work could be.

Müller's influence on British painting was not as great as some of his contemporaries, notably David Cox, were inclined to think. But he was unquestionably a good second-rater.

SYDNEY J. MAIDEN

## JAMES II

"JAMES II". By F. C. Turner. *Eyre and Spottiswoode.* 21*s.*

KING JAMES II was not a very attractive character, and it would probably be beyond the wit of the most fervent partisan

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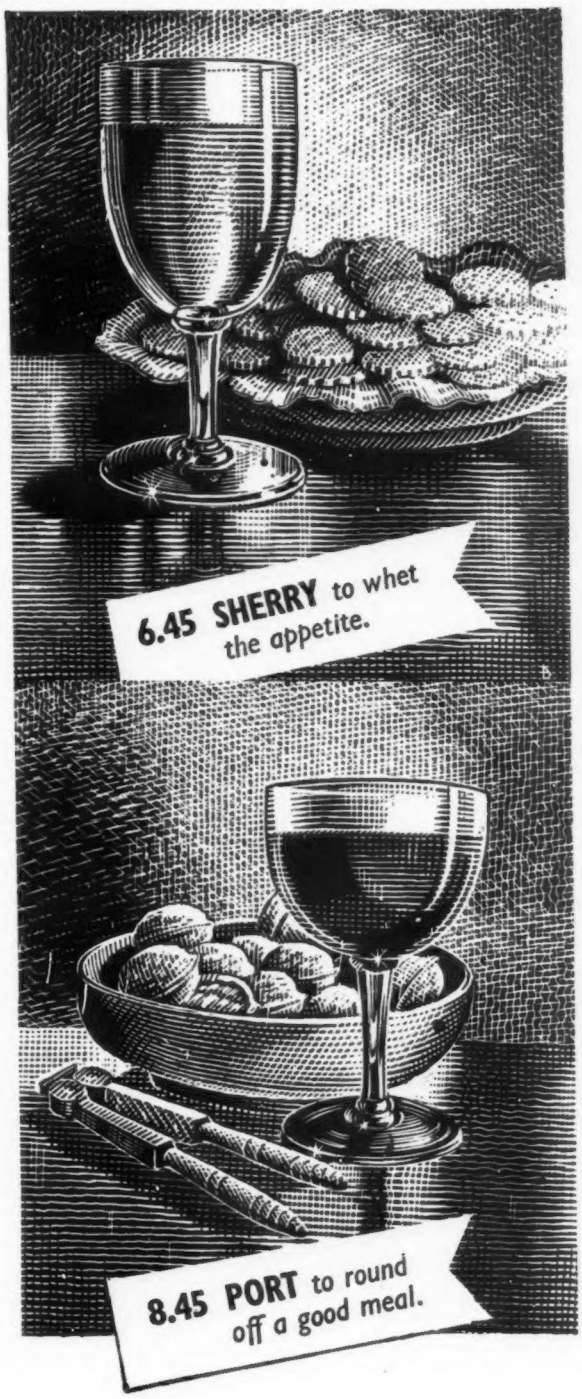


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of the Stuarts to write his panegyric. Even those who, through political or religious bias have approved of all that he stood for, have found it difficult to praise the man himself. Doubtless it is for this reason that, although he has been no less written about than the rest of his House, full-length biographies of him have been comparatively few.

Mr. F. C. Turner's book is a work of sound and discriminating scholarship. While not despising the fruits of recent research, he has rightly gone back to the original authorities and has scrupulously sifted and clearly marshalled an immense amount of material. He is, perhaps, a little too judicial; he approaches his subject with the austere impassiveness of a surgeon performing an autopsy. Rarely, if ever, does he give James the benefit of the doubt. Some readers may be disposed to disagree with certain of his conclusions; to continue, for instance, to attribute to James a greater share in the regeneration of the Navy than Mr. Turner is prepared to accord to him.

But if Mr. Turner's own appraisal of James is almost invariably cold and unsympathetic, he never forces his opinions on his readers, but leaves it open to them to take a more indulgent view on the comprehensive evidence he has honestly set before them. And, after all, it may be maintained that a man to whose nature the quality of mercy was altogether alien scarcely deserves much mercy from his biographer.

CYRIL HUGHES HARTMANN.

## AN EARLY FINANCIAL PLANNER

THE AMAZING STORY OF JOHN LAW, Scottish Financier and Gambler. By H. Montgomery Hyde. *Home and Van Thal.* 16*s.*

IN early manhood "Beau Law" was kept in luxury by a woman on condition that he never attempted to discover her identity. Then, having escaped from gaol after killing a man in a duel, he made much money in Venice through his complete mastery of the mathematical probabilities in throwing dice. Early given to economic theorizing, he acquired in France, after launching his great Mississipi company, supreme control of the national finances, having convinced the Duke of Orleans, regent for Louis XV, that his currency methods would save French finances, until he succeeded in making metal currency illegal in a country which had not known banknotes. With the Mississipi failure, Law's whole scheme collapsed.

Law himself had been too loyal to salt any of his money abroad. His estates at Guermantes and elsewhere were confiscated, as well as the personal wealth by inheritance which he had brought to France, and in other ways he was unfairly treated to placate popular fury. His duel having been pardoned he went to England, but there he suffered from the after effects of the South Sea Bubble, which the popular mind regarded as similar to Law's operations, although there was no similarity between the English and French disasters. He died in Venice, where his actuarial skill at the tables secured him some comfort in his last few years.

The protagonist of many economic theories which were later successfully applied, John Law provides material for a fascinating biography or book of economic theory or of both. Mr. Montgomery Hyde has mastered all the material available about Law, and has done some new research work of importance.

BRIAN LUNN.

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